The Hudson Review

EDITORS: *William Arrowsmith, Joseph Bennett, Frederick Morgan*
MANAGING EDITOR: *Lisa Dyer*

VOLUME V, NUMBER 2 SUMMER 1952

Seven Indian Tales *with illustrations by the author*	JAIME DE ANGULO	165
Fictitious Americans 1. A Preface to "Ethan Brand" 2. Potraits from a Family Album	STANLEY GEIST	199
The Atlantic Unites	R. P. BLACKMUR	212
Good News of Death (*a verse pastoral*)	LOUIS SIMPSON	233
Jungian Mythology	ROBERT GRAVES	245
Three Poems	THOMAS BARBOUR	258
Notes from La Vie de Bohème	HERBERT GOLD	260
Rome Letter	BEN JOHNSON	270
Missing: A Milieu for Theatre	WILLIAM BECKER	276
Stage Personality of Martha Graham	BEATRICE GOTTLIEB	282
Dreiser's Place on the Screen	GEORGE BARBAROW	290
Reviews:		
The Lyre and the Sledgehammer	JOSEPH BENNETT	295
The Topics of Discrimination	R. W. B. LEWIS	308
Equilibrist with an Eagle	GROVER SMITH	314
Communications		317

THE HUDSON REVIEW is published quarterly by The Hudson Review, Inc., 439 West Street, New York 14, N. Y. Subscriptions $3.50 per year in U. S. and Canada; foreign $4.00. Single copy, $1.00; in Canada, $1.15. U. S. distributor: B. de Boer, P. O. Box 761, Hoboken, N. J. Business and subscriptions in England: B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., The Broad Street, Oxford. Rates in England: Subscriptions 25/ per year; single copy 7/6d. Distribtuor in France: Nouvelles Messageries de la Presse Parisienne, 111 Rue Réaumur, Paris 2. Rates in France: Subscriptions 1200 fr. per year; single copy 400 fr. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. Copyright 1952 by The Hudson Review, Inc. Registered U. S. Patent Office. Entered as second class matter June 25, 1948 at the Post Office at New York, New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Numbered pages containing advertising material only have been deleted.
Reprinted with the permission of the original publisher.

AMS Reprint Company
New York, New York

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reprinted 1963
By Permission
of the Original Publisher

AMS REPRINT COMPANY
New York 3, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JAIME DE ANGULO

Seven Indian Tales[1]

1. *Coyote Old Man and His Grandson Hawk Chief*

THEY WERE LIVING AT Tuléyomi. There was Coyote Old Man and his wife Pelican Queen, and his two grandsons; the Big Blue Hawk—*Wekwek Hoypu*—and his elder brother *Wiwwa Wekwek,* the little Sparrow Hawk. Those two were Chiefs.

One day Hawk Chief went hunting ducks, and while he was hunting he saw Weasel's house on a hillside. He went up there, he went into the house, but there was no one home. He found some acorn-mush, and he ate it with a bit of squirrel that he found in the ashes of the fire. Then he went around looking for things, and that's when he found the beads, four sacks of them. Hawk Chief took them; he went to the creek and hid them in the water . . . then he got scared and ran home, and went to bed without eating.

When Weasel came home and went into his house, he knew right away that something was wrong. He went over to the place where he kept his beads. . . . The place was empty! The beads were gone! Then he got mad, he got madder and *madder*, and for four days he cried. He cried and he cried. Then he stopped crying, and went outside with his eyes swollen, and looked around.

Then, they say, he made a fire. He made it hot by blowing on it, and then he stuck his spear into the fire. The fire made the spear hot, red hot. Then Weasel sang his war-song and danced. He stomped around the fire, singing:

Ya'yahenna ya'yahenna hawennee rawenneera . . .

he was singing . . . "You want to try me, eh? I guess you're not afraid of me, eh? All right, I'll find you wherever you are!" Then he pulled his spear out of the fire and he pointed it to the East; then he pointed it to the North; then he pointed it to the West; then he pointed it to the South, and there it found him, way down South over the mountains, the spear found the Hawk

[1]Selections from *Indian Tales* by Jaime de Angulo, to be published in September by A. A. Wyn, Inc., New York. Copyright 1952 by A. A. Wyn, Inc.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chief in the house where he lived with Coyote Old Man and Pelican Queen.

They were all sitting around the fire, and Hawk saw that spear coming out of the fire at him. "Give him back his beads! Give him back his beads! I stole them. I hid them all there in the creek. Give them back!" The Hawk was crying, running around the centerpost.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Coyote Old Man.

Then, they say, the world caught fire. The whole world caught fire. The world was burning and burning everywhere, up the canyons and down the slopes and over the flats. For days and days it burned, for days and nights it burned. . . .

At last, Coyote Old Man thought: "I had better stop that fire! Where is my rain-sack?" He went to the hiding place under the eaves, and he got his rain-sack. Then he went out of the house. He went to the redwood tree and he beat the sack against the tree—

Fog, fog, fog—
Foggy rain, foggy rain.
Drip . . . drip . . . drip . . . drip-drip-drip

Old Man Coyote went back into the house and took up the elk-horn he had been boring a hole into. "Grandfather, what are you doing?" "Oh, nothing . . . just having a little something to eat."

Rain, rain, rain, ten days and ten nights it rained. The world stopped burning. It kept on raining. The water was rushing down the creeks; in the bottom of the valleys the water rose in lakes. It rose around the house, it rose to the roof, it started to pour in at the smoke-hole. Hawk Chief flew out of the house.

Four times he went circling over the world, looking for a place to land. *We'e'e'ek . . . we'e'e'ek . . . tlan-tlan-tlan-tlan . . . we'e'e'ek . . .* he went circling over the world four times looking for a place to land.

Even the top of the Old Mountain was just under the water, but on the very top there was a branch of a bush sticking out. Hawk Chief perched on it, he was so tired! but that branch kept bobbing up and down, it kept ducking the Hawk in and out of the water . . . "Grandfather! Grandfather! Catch me! I am drowning!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But Coyote Old Man couldn't hear; he was inside the hole in the elk-horn; he was singing:

Nenniyowa nenney . . . nenniyowa nenney
Mother, give me some acorn-mush
nenniyowa nenney
With a roast of rabbit-ham, mother
nenniyowa nenney . . . nenniyowa nenney . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On top of the Old Mountain two Diving-Duck Old Men were swimming about. Hawk saw them. "Grandfathers, grandfathers, catch me! Oh, Grandfathers, I am drowning! Grandfathers, grandfathers, *catch me*!" One of the two old Ducks came close. "All right, drop on my back."

Hawk Chief dropped on his back and the Old Man Duck plunged with him and took him down to their house under the water. There they made a bed for him, and there he lay for eight days.

Now, they say, the world was free of water. It went down little by little, down the sides of the big mountains, and down the hillsides, but the valley bottoms were still full of mud. Then Coyote Old Man missed the Hawk Chief, his grandson. He missed him, and he cried. He went around looking for him, crying.

The Diving-Duck Old Men awoke the Hawk, in their house. "Get up, get up, it's time for you to get up. You are all right now." So he got up, and they gave him something to eat.

Then he took out his beads; he made two strings of them, and he hung them about the necks of the two old men. They were pleased: "Ho! Ho! Grandson, thank you, thank you!" "Well . . . good-bye, Grandfathers. I'm going to look for Coyote Old Man." "All right, good-bye . . . but why do you want to look for that old rascal?"

So the Hawk went. He went all around looking for his grandfather. Everywhere the world was still full of mud, and it was dark, and it was cold. At last he arrived at Tuléyomi. He stood on one side of the creek, and on the other side he saw a man standing.

"Who are you?" asked that man.

"And you, who are you?"

"First, you tell me who *you* are."

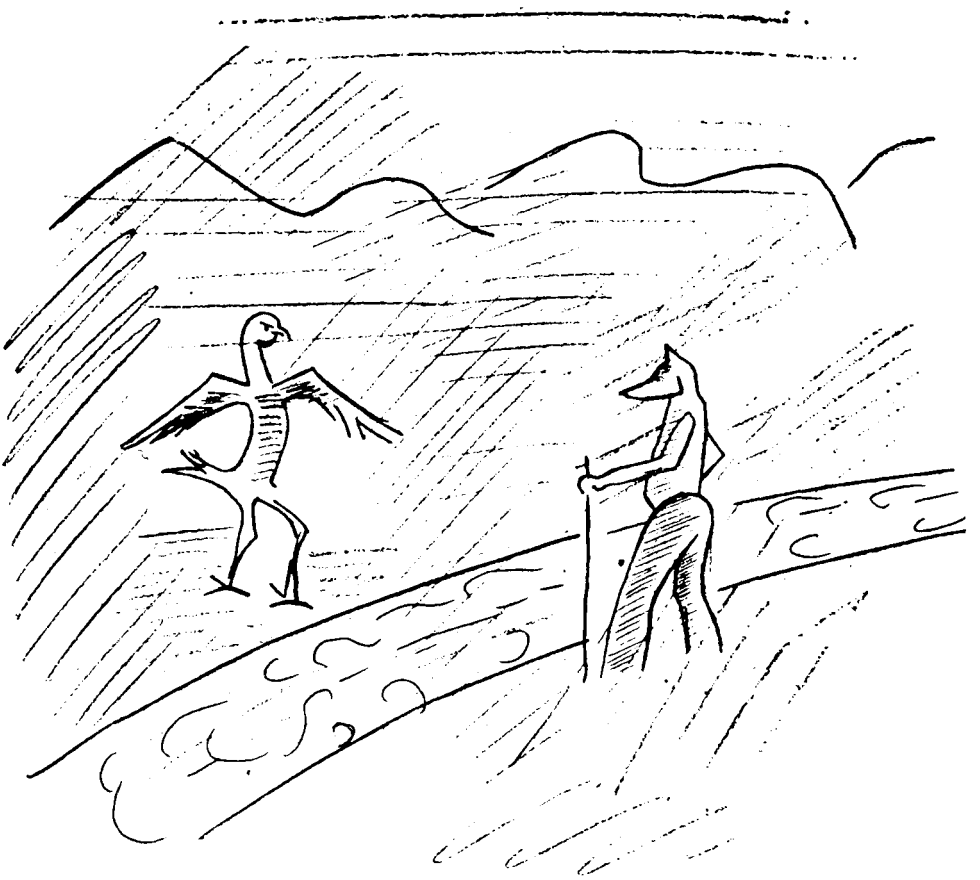
"No, no . . . you tell me first what *your* name is."

"The world has been destroyed! Where are you going? You must be full of power, to be still alive!"

"Well . . . You seem to be full of power yourself," said Hawk Chief, and he added: "Come on, hurry up, tell me who you are before I kill you!"

"Very well then, I'll tell you who I am . . . I am Coyote Old Man!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"And I am Hawk Chief!"

"Grandson, grandson, *huyey*!" he cried. From the other side he jumped across the creek and threw his arms around his grandson. He put Hawk Chief on his shoulders and took him home, and he made a bed for him, and there they stayed. . . .

*

In those days the world was dark, there was no fire and Hawk Chief didn't like it. "Why is there no fire and no sun?" he grumbled; "grandfather, why don't we have fire?"

"Well . . . everything is destroyed, nothing left! You are just a boy, you don't understand the destruction of the world!"

"Oh, you could get it for us if you wanted to."

"How could I?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh . . . you could, *if* you wanted to. . . ."

"All right! I'll go and look for fire."

So, Coyote Old Man started out the next morning, *tononononono* . . . he arrived at the house of the two Rat Brothers. He called, "Hey! grandsons, hey!"

One of the Rats answered from inside. "Well . . . the door is right there on the south side!"

The other Rat scolded his brother: "What's the matter with you? What are you mad about? That's no way to talk to a visitor! How do you know but it might be somebody of importance, a Chief of some tribe? As a matter of fact, I see it's Grandfather Coyote! There must be something wrong for grandfather to be travelling so far from his home. . . . Come in, grandfather, come on in. You are welcome! And what brings you around this way?"

Old Man Coyote came in and sat down; then he opened the little buckskin sack hanging from around his neck, and pulled out a string of beads, pulling and pulling, he brought out a long string of them. He cut the string, and knotted the end beads, and gave the string to one of the Rats. Then he pulled out another string of beads and gave it to the other Rat. Then he spoke. He said: "Your cousin wants fire. That's why I came here. I came to get you two to find it and bring it back for him. I know there are some people in the South World who still have fire. But they keep close watch on it, so nobody will steal it. I'm too old to go, but you two are young and are known as good runners."

"All right, all right, grandfather. Tomorrow we'll start. Tomorrow we'll be at your place. We'll stop by your house on our way. You can count on us."

Then Coyote Old Man went back home along the trail, *tononononono.*

"Did you find those two, grandfather?"

"Which two?"

"The two Fire Stealers—those two who are good thieves."

"How do you know about them?"

"But did you find them? Tell me, did you find them?"

"They said they would be here tomorrow."

Next morning the two Wood-Rats arrived. "Here we are," they said; "we told you we would come. We've been talking about it. It's pretty hard to steal fire from those people in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

South World, even a spark of it! They don't let anyone take any of it! But we'll try to steal a little of it for you, for your grandson. It's pretty hard to live without fire!"

"Good," said Coyote Old Man. He went to a corner of the house, fumbled for a while under the rafters, and came back with two pieces of punk-wood. He gave one of these to the first Wood-Rat and the other to the second. Then the two Fire-Stealers set out on the run.

South World!
South World!
South World!
South World!

There is a gate there, *tututututututu.* As it opened of itself from the other side, the two Wood-Rats slipped through, the Fire-Stealers. It slammed together after them, and they went on, running abreast.

There, in the South World, the people lived in a large house. They didn't have a regular fire in the center, but there were two Crows standing there, and when they cried *Ko'o'o'o'o'o,* the fire came out of the ground, shooting sparks.

The two Rats peeked in at the door; everybody was asleep. They stole in on tiptoe, they stepped carefully and made their way to the center of the house. They edged in closer and closer to the Crows holding their sticks of punk-wood ready. The two Crows cried, *Ko'o'o'o'o'o.* The fire shot up from the ground at their feet, the Wood Rats caught the sparks in their punk-wood, and now they jumped for the door!

But Crane, they say, was the Watchman at the door. He was asleep, lying stretched across the threshold. The Rats stumbled over his legs. "*Wa'a'a'k . . . Wa'a'a'k . . .* Someone is stealing our fire!"

The people awoke on all sides. "Are you all *dead?* . . . What's the matter? . . . Somebody stole a piece of our fire! . . . There were two of them, those Fire-Stealers, those Wood-Rats. . . . Which way did they go? . . . Here they are! Here they are! . . . Catch them, hit them quick. . . . No, no, don't hit them, we'll keep them for pets, catch 'em! . . ."

In the confusion the Rats slipped away under some leaves.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Fire-Stealers ran back along the trail, back to the gate of the South World. *Tutututututu* . . . the gate opened of itself and they went through.

They arrived at Coyote's house. "Here, grandfather, we have brought it!" And they gave him the two sticks of punk-wood. The fire was smouldering inside.

"Good," said Coyote. He took a piece of dry wood and scraped some fine shavings with a flint until he had a little pile; he stuck the sticks into the pile and he blew on it.

Smoke, smoke, *smoke* . . . then the fire blazed up—and Hawk Chief was glad.

*

Coyote and his grandson now had fire. But it was dark all over the land. Hawk Chief began to grumble again. "Grandfather, why haven't we a Sun? I want sunlight!"

"Yes, yes, I heard you. But how can I get it?"

"Oh you know . . . you know everything, grandfather, and how it used to be before the destruction of the world. You can get us the Sun if you want to."

"All right, all right. . . . I'll go and see your cousins, the Doves. Maybe they can help us."

So the next day he set out, and *tononononono* . . . he went south. He arrived at the house of the Dove Brothers. And he called: "Hey! . . . hey!"

One of the Doves answered from inside: "Well, the door is under the pepper-tree. Can't you see it? You must be blind."

The other Dove scolded his brother: "What's the matter with you? Haven't you got any manners? What are you mad about *now*? How do you know but what someone important might be coming, a Chief of some tribe. And you acting like a fool! . . . Why, look! It's our grandfather Coyote! There must be something wrong for grandfather to be travelling so far from his home. Come in, grandfather, come in—and what brings you this way?"

Coyote Old Man came in and sat down. He didn't say anything at first. Then he took out his four sacks of beads and laid them on the ground before him. He put two sacks in front of one Dove brother and two in front of the other. Then he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said: "Why . . . I came because he wants the Sun, that cousin of yours. He grumbles all the time. He doesn't like it to be dark! That's what I want you two to do—I want you to get the Sun, if you can."

"All right, grandfather, all right! We think we can get the Sun for you. We'll start first thing tomorrow. You can count on us."

"Good," said Coyote, and *tononononono* . . . he trotted back home.

Next morning they arrived. "Well, grandfather, here we are, and what is it you want us to do?" "Why! I want you to get the Sun! The world is going to be sunny all the time, it's going to be lighted. The Chief wants it that way."

"Oh, all right. That's easy . . . let's start right now!"

So they started, and they travelled way down south until they found the house of the Sun. It lived there all alone in its house on top of a small hill. Grandfather Coyote and the two Doves stopped a little way off, and they called. They called again and again. But the Sun wouldn't come out.

Coyote turned to the Doves: "Well . . . what are you going to do now? How are you going to get it to come out?"

One of the Doves said to his brother: "You try first."

"No, *you* do it, you're the one."

"No, no. *You* do it. Try it, anyhow. Maybe you are too young, but you can try first. Then I'll show you how to do it."

The younger Dove then took up his sling; he put a stone in it. He whirled the sling above his head, and let the stone go. Straight east it went, and hit the house of the Sun, hit it on one side and glanced off! The Sun jumped high in the air through the smoke-hole; it hung there for a moment, and then fell down again into the house.

"Well!" said Coyote Old Man.

"Didn't I tell you?" said the elder Dove to his brother; "didn't I tell you? You did just as I said you would. Now watch me. . . ."

He whirled the sling and let the stone fly. On and on it went and crashed into the house of the Sun right square in the middle of it. The Sun jumped up through the smoke-hole and went spinning up into the sky, blazing, way up into the sky. And there it stopped still!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well, well, well!" cried Coyote Old Man, and he threw up his arms and fell over backwards, rolling his eyes in amazement. They helped him to his feet. "Yes, yes, children, now I am happy!"

*

Now they had fire, and the Sun shone over the world, but still Hawk Chief was not satisfied. He wandered around grumbling.

"What's the matter *now?*" asked his grandfather.

"Grandfather, why aren't there people? I want people to be!"

This time Coyote Old Man got mad. "All right," he said, "and now *we* will have to go away!"

Then he carved some people out of little oak-sticks—but they did not become people.

Then he tried sticks of pine. "Become people!" he ordered them—but they did not become people.

He tried all kinds of trees—but still they did not become people.

Coyote was mad. He cried: "When the fleas bite you, then you will become people!"

The fleas bit them—but that did not wake them up. Then Coyote Old Man set to work: he took sticks of buckeye and carved all kinds of people out of them; he worked on them inside his Ceremonial-House, and then set them up all around; he stuck them in the ground on the south side, and on the north side, and on the east side, and on the west side. Then he cut up some milk-weed into little pieces and scattered them all over the sticks, and he cried: "Tomorrow morning they will talk!"

The next morning they were all walking about and talking inside the Ceremonial-House. "The fleas nearly finished us last night. . . . " they were saying. Coyote came in.

"I want to speak to you all," he said, "and tell you who you are. Those who live in the west will be called by that name. Those who live in the south will be called by another. Those who live in the east will speak in a different language. And those who live in the north will talk in still another tongue. In the four lands there will be people now!"

"The fleas finished us last night," they said.

"All right," said Coyote Old Man, "but now listen to what I am saying. I am not speaking about fleas. I am going to speak

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to you all. I am telling you something. I want to teach you. When that is done, in four days from now, I am going away. My grandson doesn't like it here."

"All right," the people said.

The next morning they woke up and started a dance. They danced four days. They were talking in different languages, and they didn't understand one another. Now Coyote spoke: "When you die you are to come to my land, four days after you have died. Living people are *not* to come to my land: *only dead people.*"

Then he went to work and arranged everything the way it was to be. He made the pine be pine, and the oak be oak; to Bluejay he said, "You are Bluejay," and to Duck he said, "You are Duck." He said: "You, you are Deer," and "You, you are Mudhen. . . ." He made everything like that.

Then he called to his wife: "Old Woman, hurry up now; gather up your things and your baskets . . . we are going now!" "Very well," said Pelican Queen.

Then he turned to the people once more: "You all heard what I said. Now don't forget! When you die you are to come to my land in the West. In the West, beyond the ocean, I shall be." Then he went away with his wife and his grandson, they say.

Hawk Chief wanted to stay, but the Old Man said: "Well, you wanted people to be, didn't you? Now we have to go away. Come along." That's the way they went. They went West, beyond the ocean. And that's where they live still.

2. *The Gilak-Monster*

It was Swan-Woman who wove the first basket, the first basket ever made. She wanted something to keep her earrings in, and her beads, and her comb . . . so she thought about making a basket, she thought about it, she thought about weaving it . . .

She went to see her sister. Her sister was a woman who knew a great deal about the mysterious things, about magic. And now the Swan-Woman asked her what she thought about it, what she thought about this idea of hers, of making a basket, of making a basket by weaving. . . .

"Yes, I think so. I think you can do it, although it is a danger-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ous thing to do. Something might happen while you are doing it . . . there is danger in it . . . you will have to be careful, you will have to be careful."

Swan-Woman then went to see her friend Quail-Woman. Quail-Woman also had magical force; her power was of snakes. "Do you think it would be all right for me to weave a basket? Do you think there is too much danger in it? I have been thinking and thinking about it."

Quail-Woman said nothing for a while. Then she said: "Yes, I think you can do it. Go ahead, weave a basket, but you will have to be careful. As for me, I will protect you against the dry ones, the ones on land, but I have no power for water-things."

Swan-Woman then commenced her basket, and as she wove, she made a pattern: first, a snake pattern going all around; next she wove a water-ripples pattern and she added to it the quail-crest-plume pattern (Quail-Woman had given her one of her feathers to keep among her weaving materials). So it was that Swan-Woman made the first basket.

Then Quail-Woman also made a basket for herself. The basket she made was a large basket, a very large basket. It was this way: she wanted to give it to her husband for him to give it to his people so that they might store in it their crop of acorns. Her husband was Hawk.

But after she commenced weaving it, she was sorry; she hated giving it to her husband Hawk, because he was running with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other women. . . . So she sat weaving and weaving, and feeling bad; she did not want to give her basket. . . .

At last she had finished the huge basket, and she had made up her mind to run away. But everywhere she went, she left red tracks: she went over rocky ground and she left red tracks on the rocks; she crossed the creek and she left red tracks on the rocks at the bottom; she thought: "He will follow me, my husband will," and she came back discouraged.

Now she took the large basket to the creek to wash it. She was thinking. She climbed into it and went floating downstream toward the lake. Then she thought: "I wish my house to become a stone house! I wish my children to fall asleep; then when I get to where I am going, I will send them a dream, and they will know how to reach me." (She had left enough food to last them for four days, dried meat, acorn-meal, and other kinds of food.)

Now she was sailing down the river. She floated like that all night. She floated to the middle of the lake; monsters came up on all sides, but they saw the designs on the basket, the patterns of snake, and of water-ripples, and of quail-plume, and they were entranced. . . .

At dawn the basket drifted near the shore; she did not know where to go: "Shall I go South? Shall I go North? Shall I go East? Shall I go West? . . ." And while she was wondering where to go, the *Gilak-Monster* came soaring in the air looking for people to steal, and he saw her, and he swooped down and flew off with her to his home in the mountains.

He goes flying through the air. You can hear him from afar—*kinikinkinkinikinikini.* When his brother hears him he opens the flap over the smoke-hole. When his sister hears him, she wakes up. She was their younger sister, she was the Ceremonial-Drum.

She wakes up; she yawns and stretches her limbs, showing her long, sharp teeth. . . .

Kinikinkinkinikinikini . . . The Gilak is coming through the air, holding a man in his claws, or a boy, or a woman in his claws, anyone he can pick up in the lower country to bring home to his sister, the Ceremonial-Drum, in their village in the mountains; he brings them home; when the elder brother hears him, he opens the flap over the smoke-hole, and the Gilak drops the man, the boy, the woman through the smoke hole. . . . The Ceremonial-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Drum opens her legs and chews them up and spews forth the bones—there was a heaped-up ring of them all around the house.

Inside the door, two bears crouched, and there were two snakes coiled along the passageway. The Watchman was Bumblefly: he stood on the roof of the house, watching all around—he had only one eye (the Gilak got mad one day because he found him asleep on his watch, so he gouged out one eye— "And next time I find you asleep I'll take out your other eye!"). And the Gilak's elder brother had only one leg, because the Gilak got mad one day when his brother had forgotten to set the trap at the inside dooway; so he cut off his elder brother's leg and he said: "Next time you forget to set the trap, I'll cut off your other leg!" Inside the inner doorway the trap was set: somebody might catch the bears and the snakes asleep, but when he got to the inner doorway, the trap caught him and flung him against the center-post and broke his back.

That's where the Gilak people lived in the mountains. That's where the Gilak took Hawk's wife when he swooped down on her as she floated in the lake in the large basket; but he did not drop her through the smoke-hole. He took her in at the door and said to his brother: "Take care of her for me," and he flew out again to look for people in the valleys to feed to his sister, the Ceremonial-Drum.

When Hawk got home and found his woman gone, he felt bad. He was sorry. He cried; he said: "I'll go and get her back!" His grandfather Coyote said: "You had better not go. You had better stay away from those Gilak people. They're bad people, they'll kill you! It's too bad, and I feel sorry for you, but you had better not go. Those Gilaks are hard people to beat and you don't know how!"

But Hawk would not listen. He rolled himself back and forth on the ground, and feathers grew on him. Now he was a hawk—he laid his bow and arrows on the ground and tried himself for a short flight; he went up a little way and flew back again, and swooped down to pick up his bow and arrows; and up he flew again, up into the air, toward the mountains.

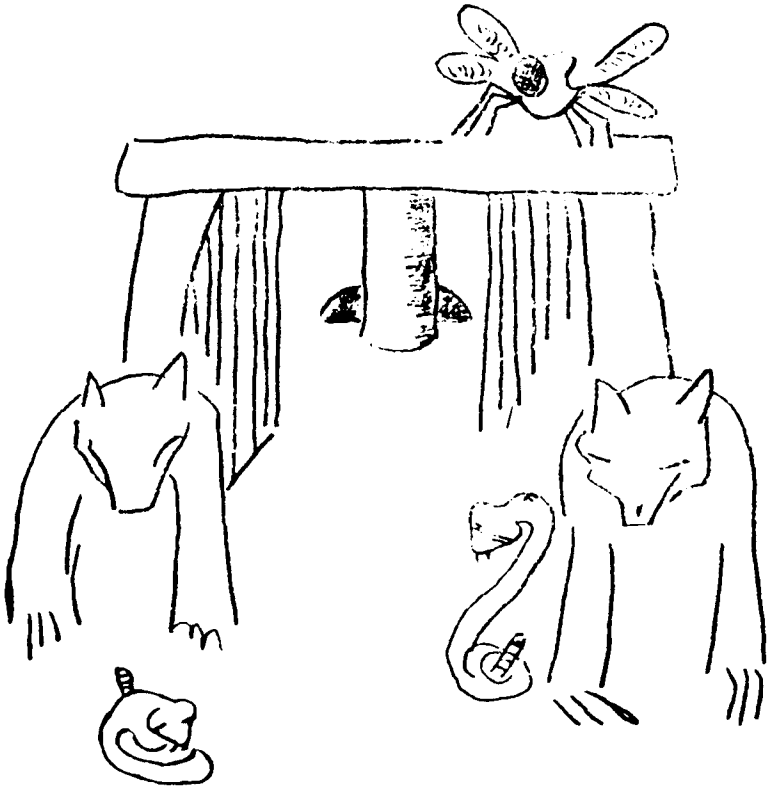
When he arrived at the place of the Gilaks he rolled himself on the ground and rubbed off his feathers, and now he was Hawk again. Then he crept to the door—then he shot the two bears—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

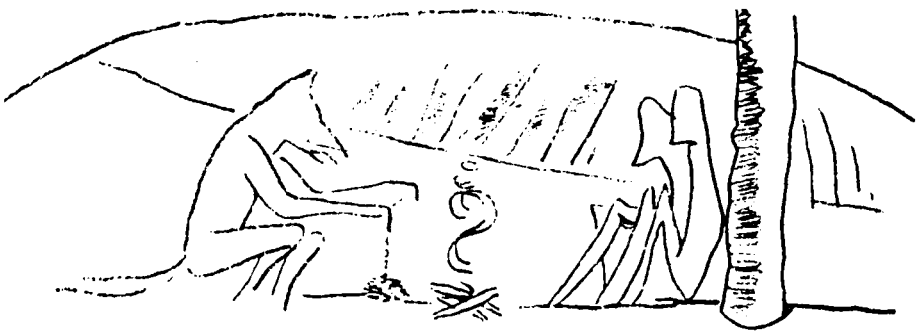
then he shot the two snakes—then he rushed in and the trap caught him and flung him against the center-post and broke his back. The elder Gilak picked him up and threw him to their sister; the Ceremonial-Drum opened her legs and chewed him up and spat forth the bones through the smoke-hole.

And right away his grandfather Coyote Old Man knew that Hawk was dead. The old man cried and rolled over and laid his head into the fire, but his other grandson Hawk pulled him out by the feet.

Now Coyote Old Man set about recovering the bones of his grandson. He wanted the bones of his grandson; he wanted warriors to go with him. First he went to see the Flint brothers; Coyote Old Man went *tononononono* . . . limping along the trail with his stick and carrying his little buckskin sack hanging from



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



his neck. He arrived at their house, he went it, he sat down by the fire without saying anything. Then he opened his little sack and began to pull out a string of beads. Pulling and pulling, he drew out quite a pile of beads. Then he cut the string, and made a knot at each end, and he put one of the ends back into the little buckskin sack hanging from his neck. And he pushed the pile of beads across to the Flints: "Here, this is for you, I want you to come and help me recover the bones of my grandson." "All right, Grandfather, we'll help you, you can count on us, we'll be there at your place tomorrow."

And then *tononononono* . . . Old Man Coyote went along the trail, limping and leaning on his stick, to the house of the Bluebird brothers. He sat in front of the fire and began pulling out a long string of beads from the little sack hanging at his neck. Pulling and pulling, he brought out a long string of beads. Then he cut the string, and made a knot at each end, and put one end back into his little sack. "I want you two to come and help me recover the bones of my grandson; they say you are good warriors, that's what I have heard." "Yes, grandfather, we are fear-nothing men, we can fight, we will help you; yes, grandfather, you can count on us."

And then *tononononono*. . . . Old Man Coyote went along the trail to the house of the Towhee Brownbirds. . . . "They say you are good gamblers, that's what I have heard. I want you to help me." "Yes, grandfather, yes, we have power for gambling, we shoot straight, we'll help you; we'll be there at your place tomorrow morning."

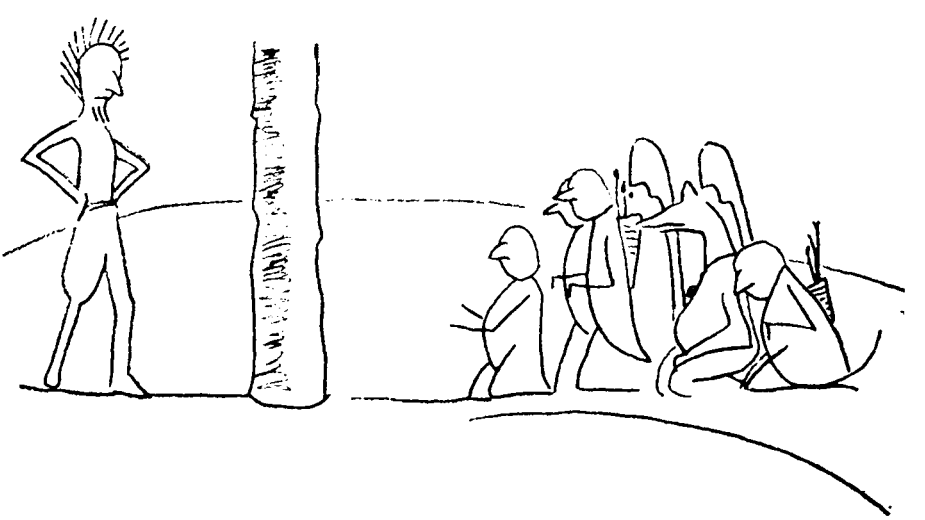
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the morning, they all started, the six of them and Coyote Old Man, making for the mountains. On the way, Coyote Old Man said: "Boys, if you should find a bit of punk-wood lying around somewhere, bring it to me, I want it for a purpose." And Coyote Old Man also said: "Boys, if somewhere along the trail you should find a slab of rock lying around, bring it to me. I need it for something."

Now they arrived at the place of the Gilaks, way back behind the mountains, and Coyote Old Man hid his men in the bush while he went around the house, picking up the bones of his grandson Hawk from among the pile of bones that littered the ground. Then Coyote Old Man put the bones of his grandson into the little sack hanging from his neck, and he took out of the sack the punk-wood and the slab of rock.

He lit fire to the punk-wood, he crept to the door and blew the smoke down the passageway; it blinded the bears and the snakes and they all slipped by. At the inner doorway Coyote Old Man threw in the slab of rock; the trap caught the rock and hurled it against the center-post.

When the smoke cleared up, Coyote and his men were sitting against the wall, humming a gambling-song. The elder Gilak was very much surprised, but he said nothing. He brought some fire-wood, threw it on the fire, and sat down watching the others. Very soon they heard the younger Gilak flying home over the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mountains. *Kinikinkinkinikinikini* . . . he flew in at the smoke-hole. "How did they get in?" he shouted. His elder brother answered: "I don't know, I don't understand it, the house got full of smoke and when it cleared up, here they are! I don't know how they got in, but they act as if they had come to gamble."

Coyote Old Man spoke: "Yes, we have come to gamble. That is, if you are not afraid of us, or maybe you haven't got any beads . . ." and he pulled the string of beads out of the little buckskin sack hanging at his neck. He cut the string, he tied each end into a knot and he shoved one end back into the sack; the beads made a big pile in front of him.

"That's a lot of money!" said the Gilaks. "But we can cap it." They brought out their beads; they had just enough to cap the other pile. And the Gilak said: "You had better be good gamblers, because we shoot straight, and I want to warn you—we don't play like children, for fun; and we don't guess just by shooting out our hands; oh no! we guess with the arrows from our bows! . . . so if you are afraid, it is still time for you to quit, and we will take all the beads."

But the others had already started the song, and Coyote had given the bones to the Flints to hide; they were singing and swaying together. The younger Gilak was stringing his bow; he tested the string and made it hum; then he took an arrow and straightened it carefully. The others were singing and swaying, they were singing all together, they were singing fine.

Now the Gilak nocks the arrow, he draws it to the head, he shoots once, he shoots again: one arrow hit the elder Flint sideways and glanced off, one arrow hit the younger Flint square and split in two against his face.

Coyote Old Man said: "Good guessing! Good shooting! You hit us both times. Now it's our turn to shoot." He threw the bones across the fire to the Gilak.

Then the Gilaks took the bones and started their song; but the younger Gilak would not stay still, he was jumping sideways, fast, faster, now he is flying, darting from side to side of the house, below the roof in the darkness, like an angry wasp buzzing the song.

Coyote Old Man whispered to the Bluebirds: "You two do the guessing! Shoot him next to the big toe, that's where he keeps his heart."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now one Bluebird strings his bow while his brother shoots his medicine like a searchlight, and it picks out the Gilak where he flies zigzag in the darkness under the roof of the house. The arrow flies, and the Gilak falls down dead.

The Brown Towhee Birds dragged his corpse toward the Ceremonial-Drum; she was opening her legs. The elder Gilak cried: "Don't do that! She is his sister!" But they shot him too, and threw both corpses to the Ceremonial-Drum. She chewed them up and spewed forth the bones through the smoke hole. And one Towhee said: "Brother, sing a song, and I will stamp on the drum to test if it's a good sounding one." They were stomping and dancing on the drum. "It booms fine! Boom, boom, boom, *boom*. . . . That's a good drum!" They stomped so hard, they broke the drum.

Now they all were going to tear down the house, but Bumblefly said: "No, give it to me to live in; I haven't any place to go and it's a good house."

3. *Annikadel and the Cocoon-Man*

There was no world, there was no land, everything was fog, water-foam and clouds, everywhere. Cocoon-Man was the only person living. There was no sunlight . . . it was half-dark. For an infinity of time, Cocoon-Man drifted around. He was thinking.

Then one day, looking in the direction of the sunrise, he noticed some white foam drifting down the wind. He watched it all summer. It was far off and did not come near him. Sometimes it floated near, then the wind drove it off again.

Now he tried by the power of his thought to make it come near him; he thought again and again: "Come hither," but it did not come. Now the Cocoon-Man started to sing and stomp and dance. Then he rested. Then he started again singing and dancing. Then he rested again. Then he sang again. Then he rested again. He did this for a long long time, for ten times ten years.

Then, one day that cloud of water-foam drifted near enough, so Cocoon-Man jumped on it. And he drifted around with the cloud for another infinity of time. Then one day, he noticed that he had hands and feet because the water-foam was drying

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and caking over them. He had never noticed them before. He saw that all his body was covered with a crust from the dried-up foam. So he scratched himself, and the crust dropped off his body. Then he thought: "I'll shut my eyes and see what happens." He shut his eyes, and when he opened them again he saw that the crust had become earth.

The crust that he had scratched off his body had fallen around him, and he was standing on it, like a small piece of land floating in a world of foam and fog. It tilted one way and then another. Then it shook a little and then it settled. It was like a three-cornered island. One corner was in the direction of the sunrise; another corner was in the direction of the sunset; and the other corner was in the direction of the downstream wind, the warm wind from the south.

The Cocoon-Man then sang and stomped some more, and then he shut his eyes again, and when he looked again, the three-cornered island had become bigger. He was standing in the center and he could hardly see the corners.

Now he started to travel around and he found a boy. That was Annikadel. That was his name; I don't know what it means, but it sounds something like "living with" or "living in company". Cocoon-Man asked the boy who he was, but the boy did not answer. He was a very small boy, very very small, just tiny. Cocoon-Man picked him up and put him in his bosom.

Then he traveled on. And he found another boy. It was the same boy, but he had shot ahead of Cocoon-Man and Cocoon-Man did not know it. Cocoon-Man asked him who he was, but the boy did not answer. So he picked him up and put him in his bosom. "Now there are three of us," he thought, and he went on. He had reached the western corner, and now he traveled in the direction of the warm wind from the south. After a while he found another boy. It was the same boy again, but Cocoon-Man did not know it.

Cocoon-Man asked him: "Can *you* talk?"

"Yes," said the boy who was Annikadel.

"Then say something!"

The boy said: "When you were in the middle of the world you found me and put me in your bosom. Then you went to the end of the world, and you found me again, and you put me in your bosom and went on. Then you came here to another end

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the world and you have found me again. I fooled you. I belong to the air. I am the one who makes sounds in the head. You thought you had made the world, but it is I who put the idea into your head."

Cocoon-Man was so surprised he almost fainted.

Then Annikadel said: "There are three persons you have to find. Now you go around the world, and when you find them send them to the center."

So Cocoon-Man started, and when he got to one corner of the world he found *Alium;* she was a woman, a frog-person. Cocoon-Man told her to go to the middle of the world. Then Cocoon-Man continued on his way, and at the next corner he met *Kuan;* he was a Silver-Fox person. "Go to the middle of the world, and wait for me," he said to him. And he traveled on; at the last corner he found *Dzeemul;* he was Coyote. "Where are you going?" he asked Coyote. "I dunno," said Coyote, "I am traveling . . . I am going around . . . I was worried about something . . . I thought I might meet somebody. . . ." "All right," said Cocoon-Man, "go to the middle of the world and wait for me."

Then that Cocoon-Man went away, and *nobody ever saw him again.* But Silver-Fox, Frog-Woman, and Coyote met each other in the center of the island. The world was still shaking and rocking a little. So the Silver-Fox, who was all black with silver hair, said to Coyote: "You'd better go and fix the world firmly. It's rocking too much. Make three posts and set them firmly in the ground at each corner of the world." So Coyote went.

He couldn't find anything to make posts out of, except the rainbow. So he split the rainbow in three, and drove the posts at each corner. But the posts kept shifting around. So Coyote went back and complained to Silver-Fox. Silver-Fox then made some tule-reeds come by his thinking, and he gave those to Coyote. Coyote returned to the corners of the world and tried to drive the sticks of tule into the ground, but they kept bending and breaking. So Coyote went back to the middle of the world, and complained again to Silver-Fox. But Silver-Fox only smiled and squinted his eyes. "You are stupid," he said; "you don't know how to do anything! Never mind. The world seems to be settling down anyhow; I don't think it will move any more."

Coyote said: "What are we going to do now?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Go around again, and see if you can find more people."

"No, I can't go. I have to have some water, I'm thirsty!"

"No, you don't need any water!"

"I tell you I'm hungry, I haven't anything in my belly, I'm getting weak."

"No, you don't need anything in your belly. You'd better travel!"

Then he gave Coyote a cane of tule-reed, and he said: "Here, suck on that if you are hungry and thirsty." So Coyote put it in his mouth and chewed on it, and felt better, and he started to travel.

He traveled in the direction of the sunset for some time. Then he heard voices ahead of him, behind a hill. He went around the hill but there was no one there. Now he heard the same voices on the other side of the same hill, so he ran around, but he found no one. Then he heard the same voices again on the other side of the hill, and again he ran around the hill in the other direction as fast as he could, but again he found no one! They were Wild-goose people. Silver-Fox had made them come by his thinking, just to fool Coyote. Coyote never found them, and Silver-Fox knew it. He wanted to test Coyote to find out if he could trust him to tell the truth.

Coyote went back and Silver-Fox asked him: "Did you meet anybody?"

"Yes, I found some people and they asked me who I was. I told them I was a doctor, a mean one, and I was making the world, fixing it right, the way it used to be. . . ."

"When was that?" asked Silver-Fox.

"I dunno . . ." said Coyote.

Fox didn't say anything. He only squinted and smiled.

After a while, Coyote said: "What are we going to do now?"

"Go and travel again."

"No, I'm tired . . . you make me work too hard! Besides, I don't want to go alone. I'm tired of traveling alone. It always was that two people traveled together, that's the way it used to be."

"When was that?" asked Silver-Fox.

"I dunno . . ." said Coyote.

Then Frog-Woman spoke. She said: "How would it be for me to travel along with you?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Coyote said: "Naw, I don't need a woman. What I need is something to put in my belly. I tell you, I'm awfully hungry!"

So Silver-Fox took pity on him and gave him another cane of tule to chew on, and he started. This time he went in the direction of the warm wind. After a while he met a person. It was Frog-Woman. Silver-Fox had sent her. He had made her take a long leap through the air and land in front of Coyote. But Coyote didn't recognize her. This was a much younger woman. Coyote asked her who she was, but she didn't answer. Coyote asked her again, and again she wouldn't answer. Then Coyote got mad. He said: "You'd better answer me. I am a great doctor, a mean one. If you don't answer me, I'll run my doctor's cane through you and kill you"—and he threatened her with the stick of tule he was chewing. Still she didn't answer, so Coyote ran her through with his cane. "That's the way it used to be done in the old days!" he said, and he went on.

This time he traveled in the direction of the sunrise. Now he met another woman. It was the same Frog, but he didn't recognize her. She spoke to him first. She said: "Where are you going? and why are you traveling?"

"Because I am a great doctor. I am the one who made the world. Only it isn't just right yet, and I am fixing it."

She said: "You are a liar! You are not a doctor at all! You are nothing but Coyote. I met you back there a while ago and you thought you had killed me. You don't know anything. You didn't even know I was the same one!"

Coyote was mad; he tried to grab her, but she jumped on a whirlwind and disappeared.

Then Coyote went back to the middle of the world. Silver-Fox asked him: "Did you find anyone?"

"Yep, I found several young girls and married them. Now we'll have people in this world. It won't be so lonely."

He had not noticed Frog-Woman when he came back. He had never taken any notice of her. Now he looked at her, and he thought he recognized her but he wasn't sure.

"Did I see you before?" he asked her.

She repeated: "Did I see you before?"

Coyote said: "*No*, you never saw me before!"

She repeated: "*No*, you never saw me before!"

Silver-Fox didn't say anything. He was squinting and smiling.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Coyote began to suspect they were making fun of him. He said: "I'm going out to look for something to eat, since you won't feed me anything. That tule is not nourishing enough for me and all the hard work I do for the world!"

Silver-Fox took pity on him again. "All right," he said, "go out a little way and you'll find something to eat. Go out in the direction of the cold wind. Take this sack which I wove out of tules while you were gone. You will come to a wall of rimrocks. . . ."

Coyote interrupted: "How do you know there are rimrocks? You never went there."

"All right, then don't go. I only wanted to help you. I am not hungry myself."

"I only wanted to make sure that you know what you are talking about, that's all....Now tell me what to do when I get there."

Silver-Fox said: "You are a great doctor . . . so you can make bread come just by calling."

"What's bread?"

"It's something to eat. . . . Stand under the rimrocks, hold the sack open, and call: *Wahats tunnoo* . . . bread, come! But don't eat any there. Bring it here to us, because this woman and I are also beginning to get hungry, so we will all share the bread. Now remember—don't eat it there, bring it here!"

"You don't have to tell me so many times!" said Coyote, and he went.

When he arrived at the foot of the wall of rimrocks, he sat down and thought for a while. . . . "I wonder if this is dangerous. I never heard of bread before; people never ate bread before . . ." He thought some more. . . . "Bah! it can't be dangerous. . . . Anyhow, I am a great doctor, I'm a mean one, I'm not afraid of anything."

He got up and stood under the rimrocks with his sack open. He looked up, but couldn't remember that word for *bread*. He thought—what was it he said for me to call? . . . Come . . . come . . . . Oh, yes, I remember now—"*Aliste tunnoo!*" he called at the top of his voice, holding the sack open. A lot of rocks came down on top of his head. . . . *Aliste*, that's rocks.

One big rock nearly split his head open. He went back to the middle of the world. He was limping, and his head hurt badly. Silver-Fox and Frog-Woman were gone. Coyote couldn't find them. So he started to travel around, in search of them. . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Meanwhile, Silver-Fox and Frog-Woman had been living together after they ran away from Coyote. One day they heard a sound like someone singing, somewhere high up in the sky. Frog-Woman said: "It sounds as if someone said, 'I am a she-cloud; I am the mother of water.' . . . It's going to rain! You are the cause of that! You dreamed it on purpose." Silver-Fox did not answer. He only smiled.

Soon it started to rain. Silver-Fox and Frog-Woman found a cave in the rocks and went to sleep inside. When they came out again, the rain had stopped, and there was a spring of water gurgling out of the ground. "There is the water that Coyote wanted!" said Silver-Fox.

Near the spring there was a young woman sitting on a rock.

"Are you the one who was singing in the cloud?" they asked.

"Yes, I am the one," she said.

"Have you come down to live with us?"

"No," she said, "I am a person of the air. I cannot live with you. I must go back to where I belong. But I took pity on you, because you were thirsty, and the earth is thirsty. Somebody sent me."

Silver-Fox asked: "Who sent you?"

"The one who made me dream it. . . ."

"Who is he?" asked Silver-Fox.

She said: "The same one who makes sounds in our heads, the one who makes words. . . . Now I have to go. My name is *Aluta*, but when I travel through the air I am *Lawaiidza*." Then they saw she was an Eagle-Woman. And she flew away.

After *Lawiidza*, the Eagle-Girl, flew off, Silver-Fox and Frog-Woman lived in that place. They were wondering what had happened to Coyote. "He will come back some day, and bother us again. Just wait . . ." they said to each other. Meanwhile, green things had started to come out of the ground; and some of them grew higher, and had berries on them; and some still higher and became trees, bearing acorns and pine-nuts. But there wasn't very much light. It was half-dark all the time. Then after a long time, it clouded over, and they heard the Cloud-Song again.

Then it rained, and after the rain they found the Eagle-Girl sitting by the spring once more. They said to her: "This world is all right, now, and things are growing. But we wish there would be more light. We cannot see very well in this half-light.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How is it in the upper air where you live? Is there more light, there?"

"Yes, there is more light there, but I don't know where it comes from. But I will go back there to my home and try to find out. There is more light than here, in my home in the air, but not much more. Maybe there is a way to fix it so that there will be more light." Then she flew off again.

She didn't come back for a long time, but when she returned she said: "I found out where the light comes from, what little we have of it. It comes from another World. There are two people who live there. Their name is *tsulh*. . . . I went there but I couldn't get near, not near enough to talk plainly. They seemed to be quarreling. It must be a man and a woman. *They* have plenty of light, but they don't want to leave their place and come to this world with it. I shouted to them, but they wouldn't listen to me. I think we will have to trick them if we want to make them come here!" Then Eagle-Girl flew away again.

After she was gone, Silver-Fox thought hard for a long time, then he went to sleep. When he woke up, he said to Frog-Woman: "I have dreamed of a way to trick those two people. But you will have to help me. When Eagle-Girl comes again, we will ask her to take you way up to where the Whirlwind lives. Then you jump on the Whirlwind and ride it to that other world where the two persons, the *tsulh,* live. You hang on to the Whirlwind and make it get behind those two *tsulh.* Then, when they start to quarrel, turn the Whirlwind loose on them, and push them along till you get to this world. It's easy. . . ."

But Frog-Woman didn't want to do it. She was afraid. She said: "Why don't you do it yourself?"

"Because I have to stay here to take care of this place until you come back."

"I'll take care of it," she said, "while you are gone."

But he said no, that he was afraid Coyote might come back, and he wanted to be there to handle him.

"I can handle him better than you can!" she said. And they argued and argued like that for a long time, until Eagle-Girl came back. When Eagle-Girl came back they were still arguing. Eagle-Girl said: "I had better take you both there. You can settle it when we get there."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So they both flew with Eagle-Girl. She took them to a place where she knew the Whirlwind would pass by. When he came through, whirling, they jumped on him and hung on. Silver-Fox and Frog-Woman got very dizzy. Each one was giving the Whirlwind different directions. Finally the Whirlwind split into two. Eagle-Girl fell down in-between, but she could fly. Now Silver-Fox was riding one Whirlwind, and Frog-Woman was riding the other, and both of them were giving different directions, each one chasing one *tsulh* in front of him. But Eagle-Girl was flying ahead and the Whirlwinds were following her. That's the way they came back to this world driving the two *tsulh* ahead of them. Finally, the Whirlwinds got tired and came close to the ground and then Frog-Woman and Silver-Fox jumped off. But the two *tsulh* never got back together. They are still mad at each other. One has more light than the other. One is day-sun—*matiktsa tsulh,* the other is night-sun—*mahiktsa tsulh.*

4. *Adventures of the Two Brothers*

It happened the time Redheaded Woodpecker came up from the west.

"Let's go east," he said to Timici the Black Phoebe—that's his elder brother—"We'll go find the sort of food we like to eat." As they were going along, he caught sight of an antelope.

"Let's see you try your strength on that!" said Woodpecker. The elder brother had only a blunt point of elk-horn on his arrow, the kind they use for shooting birds. But he killed the antelope with it.

"What's this over here, Brother?" says Woodpecker.

"That's good to eat, that elk,"—and he gets him too. He cuts the meat in strips and hangs it out to dry along the trail all along their way.

"And what's this, Brother?" the young one asks again as they go on their way.

"It's deer, it's good to eat," says the elder.

"What's this one, Brother?"

"It's rabbit."

"What's this one here?"

"It's coon."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What's this one, Brother?"

"That, why that's coyote!"

"What's this, Brother?"

"That's wolf!"

"And this one here?"

"That's one that kills people, it's rattlesnake."

"Well, I'm going to do something to it when we find where it is. Just watch me jump on it!" says the little one—and he jumps on the rattler!

"What's this, Brother?" he asks again.

"That one's Serpent, and he bites!" says his brother.

"Oh look at this over here! Something's got a trap in the water!" (Osi, the Sky Monster, keeps a trap down in the spring. It's made of bark string, his trap.) "Just you watch, I'm going to take a shot at him!" the youngster says, looking up in the sky. He shoots up, and the Osi starts to roll, he rolls and rolls till he hits the horizon.

"Brother, what are these over here, standing in a bunch?"

"Those are bears, they're eaters!"

"Brother, there's a woman over there! Who is she?"

"She's not a woman, she's a Spirit. And don't you bother her, she carries people off into the water, she's Water Spirit," says his elder brother.

"Well, I'm going to catch her and take her along," says the youngster, "I'm in love with her and I'm going to marry her!"

"She's a Spirit, I tell you! Don't bother her! We're going to pass right by her and go on."

"What if she is a Spirit! You can be afraid of her if you want to, but *I'm* going to marry her!" And he takes her by the hand and pulls her toward him, but while he pulls her she pulls too. She is dragging him away! "Brother! Brother!" he cries, as she carries him off into the lake and plunges him under the water. And when she has him under the water, she takes him back under the hills.

"What am I going to do about my little brother!" says Timici to himself. He calls Water Beetle. "You dive down for me," he says, and Beetle tries it, but he can't reach him. He turns back when he gets half-way.

"You go ahead and try," he asks the Water Skaters, but they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can't go far enough either. They all float when they try to dive.

"Now you try," he says to Frog, but Frog can't get far enough.

"You try," he says to Salamander, and "You try it," he says to Whirligig.

So Whirligig goes down, and he comes upon the Water Spirit just as she is in the midst of mashing the bones of the little Woodpecker. A little sliver of bone flies out at Whirligig. Now he's caught it, and up he goes! Timici has brought along a big bear-hide, and when Whirligig brings him the bit of bone, he drops it in the hide. And he goes on, crying, carrying the little bone in the bear-hide.

And so he went on his way, the elder brother, crying. Suddenly, there was a rattling in the hide. "I wonder what's rattling?" he said. Inside his bundle something rattled and rattled. "I wonder what it is, rattling?" and he untied it.

"Why Brother, I must have been asleep!" says the youngster waking up inside the sack. "Asleep! It was a Spirit, carried you off!"

"Well, let's go on now, Brother, and we'll behave better after this."

*

"Brother, what is this?"

"That's good to eat, it's meat, it's what the easterners eat. It's mountain sheep, the easterners eat it."

"Brother, what's this?"

"It's a monster, don't catch hold of it, or we'll burn up. That's the Blazing Striped Deer!"

"Well, I'm going to catch it, and try eating it!" and he catches hold of it. And when he takes it and gets as far as about over there with it, the earth catches on fire. When he lets go, the fire disappears.

"What's this, Brother?"

"That's mountain lion, but look, here we are at home again."

"Brother, what's that, standing over there against the sunrise?"

"Let it alone! Don't go up to it! That's the food for you and me. I'm going to get it, but don't you follow me." He ties his little brother with a rope. "Good-bye," he says. He goes and sneaks up on the Kutcu Monster, and shoots him dead. The minute he shoots him, the blood comes flowing like a flood! And

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what does the little brother do but twist himself loose from the rope and swim out after the arrow!

"Has he drowned, that little brother of mine?" He has been swept out by the flood, far away. The elder brother skins the Monster and takes the fat and makes four balls of it. He takes them with him and he sets out, crying, following along the edge of the flood. He's mourning for his little brother.

"Where will I ever find my brother?" he says.

The blood of the dead Monster was turning into a river. The elder brother went on, following the stream, looking for the little brother and crying as he went. Away off in the west in an unknown land at the end of the stream he found him.

"*Tuk tuk tuk tuk!*" his skeleton was saying. There it was, hanging, caught in the willows. "*Tuk tuk tuk tuk!*" it was saying, trying to attract its elder brother's attention. Naked and fleshless, nothing but bone, there he was like a pile of dry brush.

Timici takes the fat that he had brought along and starts right in to throw it at his little brother. "I wonder what is happening to me?" says the skeleton, beginning to rub himself as his elder brother slings the fat against his bones. And the elder brother slings more fat at him.

"I wonder what can be happening to me?" And he grabs himself all over as the elder brother slings more and more fat. He is turning back into a person again. The elder brother stops slinging the fat. He is holding him in his hands now and smearing it on.

"Brother! I must have been asleep!" he says, coming to life as his brother smears him. "Brother, I'll stop all this, I won't do anything more!"

"We're a long way from home," says Timici. "We've come a long way." And he leads his little brother away. They leave that land forever. "I'm not going to do anything any more," says the little brother when they reach their own country. And they get as far as the place where the Kutcu was shot without his doing anything. And for a while they just stayed there, doing nothing. The elder brother sang all the while, sang about all the places where they had been.

*

"Brother, what'll we do next?" says the little one, as his brother is singing along.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Don't you stir! You stay right here! I'm going out to get my meat again," says his elder brother, and he goes out to get the game he has just shot. When he's gone, the little brother sees another, the same kind his brother shot, and he goes after it. And as he's looking for it, he comes on a little old man. He starts to tease the little old man. It's a Supernatural Being he's teasing! With his arrow, he pokes him in the testicles, and then he hides. Then he looks out and pokes him again.

"*Pu pu pu pu!* This fellow seems to be a practical joker!" says the Old Man, and he drags him away and takes him down into his hole, and down there, there were dreadful Things that snapped at him. They were the kind that eat people.

"It looks as though a Monster has carried off my brother," says Timici when he finds him gone. "I wonder who to call on this time!" He takes Lizard with him, and he sends him into the hole. Lizard takes in some tobacco with him, tied up in a bundle. Inside, the Dreadful Things are growling. Lizard smokes tobacco in his stone pipe, filling the hole with smoke, and then while they gnash their teeth all around him, he dumps the tobacco in the fire. After they are all dead he goes out.

"You can go in now," he says to the elder brother. "Go and see if he's in there."

One after another, Timici slits open the Dreadful Things, looking for his little brother. At last he finds a little hair caught in the teeth of one of them. He takes it, one single little hair, and wraps it up, and he takes the bundle home.

And then the little brother does the same thing he did before, he speaks up inside the hide! "Ho! I must have gone to sleep again, Big Brother!" he says, when they get home, he who had just been nothing but a little hair!

5. *Coyote Steals the Sun*

The Sun used not to come over to the West, or the Moon either. It was dark all the time. It was different in those days.

Coyote used to hunt, used to go East. When he got near the timber line, he saw sunlight to the east. Then he reached the top of the mountain range, and there he saw the sunlight, and strange people.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When he had returned home he told his chief about it. "What do you want to do about it?" said Coyote's chief.

"I would go," Coyote said, "I would go to steal that Sun. It would light up the whole world!"

The people did not believe Coyote when he told them this. He set out alone, pondering over it. He set out, he travelled along, he went to see the sunlight. He lay down underneath a tree, changing himself into a stick of wood. After a while, the chief of that land came along the little trail on his way home. He took home the broken stick for his firewood. He made a fire that night —that stick jumped out of the fire. He put the little stick in again—it circled itself around the fire. He put the stick in again, he laid it crosswise, but it stood up, it raised itself and stood on end. The chief was very sleepy, and he dropped off to sleep. When Coyote saw that the chief was asleep, he changed himself into Coyote again.

Coyote saw the Sun then, and he ran outside with it. The chief awoke, and saw him as he went. But Coyote was a better runner than the people, and he outdistanced them as he ran. He came to the dark land, and the people were afraid of the dark. So he returned from there, and up to his home he came, slowly. He laid the Sun down in front of the chief's house. The chief pointed at it with his foot.

"What is it good for?" he asked.

Coyote said: "We will have the Sun for light." He said, "It will be a light!"

Coyote fixed it. "The Sun will travel along above us," he said. "It will appear in the East, and it will travel to the West," he said. "Then it will go below us and return to the East," he said. He fixed it that way. "It will go below us," he said, "and so return, return to the East."

6. *The Water Spirit and the Married Man*

A Water Spirit used to watch a married man whenever he went across the stream on the stepping stones. "I wonder who she is and why she's always gathering willow wands," said the man to himself. "I had better go and see," he said, "maybe she is doing something that concerns me." Said the man to the Spirit: "What are you doing?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm just gathering these willow wands," said the Water Spirit.

"Well, I'm going to take you with me, we are going together," said the man; "I'm going to have you for my woman," he said.

And when she said "No," the man drew her toward him by the hand.

But suddenly, as he was leading her away, it was the Water Spirit drawing *him*, making him dive into the water. Under the water, in under the hills she takes him, to a land where strange people live, the Goblins, the One-legged Imps, and the Serpent Monsters. The Monsters growled when he came near, but the woman scolded them when they snapped at him. "You mustn't be afraid," she said; "these are my pets," and then the water snakes all began to lick his hands. The next day the Goblins took him out to hunt with them.

But that man's father was crying for him, and his mother, too. They thought bears must have eaten him. After a time, when several days had passed, the Water Spirit said to him: "You may go now, you may go and visit your child. But you must not tell them about all that has happened to you, or you will die, and come back to me for always."

But when they kept asking him, and questioning him about it, he told them everything. "I must tell, even though I die for it," he said to his mother and his father. "It was a Supernatural Being who stole me away!" And as he was telling it, he died.

Frogs filled up his belly. He swelled. Toads filled him up, they came out at his mouth, they killed him. Lizards filled him up, and all sorts of water snakes. Slowly he split, dying; and when they had filled him, he burst, and they spread out over the ground after he was dead.

And the Water Spirit took him away. People used to see them afterward, used to see the two of them, walking together.

7. *The Journey of the Soul*

The Dead remain for four days, after we have buried them. When they have reached the fourth day, they go north at daybreak to the Land of the Dead.

The dead man comes to this end of a bridge. There, a man is standing, and he asks: "Why have you come here? Did you have some sickness?" he says. "Why did you die?" he asks.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes, it seems that I have died and have come to this place."

"Come here, let me bathe you," he says. And when he has finished bathing him: "Good! Now cross this bridge. Go, and look straight ahead of you. Do not look about you, or you will fall. Keep on to the other side. There is a man there. You will reach him, and he will bathe you again."

So he arrives there, and again one asks him: "Why have you come?" The second man bathes him then, bathes him again. Then he tells him: "Go on again still farther so that one again may bathe you." And on he goes, and there again he bathes, and his people meet him.

"What did you do, were you sick?" his people say when he gets there. "In this place our life is good. We dance, we play gambling games, so well we live! It is better here than our life over there. And how are all our people? How were they when you left them; are all of them well?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STANLEY GEIST

Fictitious Americans

1. *A Preface to "Ethan Brand"*[1]

THE FATHER OF MODERN GERMAN LITERATURE died calling for more light; the father of modern American literature was born calling for more darkness. In the figure of Ethan Brand, Hawthorne proposes an obsessive motif of literary expression in America: a fantasy of total illumination—of that total intellectual knowledge, unqualified by love or by moral sense, through whose acquisition the Participant in human life, suffering its bondage, is transformed to a passionless, sterile Spectator, then trapped in his own lucidity and destroyed by it. Before the lidless eyes of Ethan Brand, the human soul is "spread out against the sky like a patient etherized upon a table" (Hawthorne is as little a dead author as Eliot is British). Brand's ties with "the magnetic chain of humanity" are broken; human experience is for him a fully lit impersonal fact of which he is the "cold observer" and with which no other relation is possible than that of the eye with a thing seen, that of the intellect with its experimental materials, that of the will with the pawns in its superior game.

The personage through whom Hawthorne translates this visionary theme into what looks like (and was published as) a harmless, old-fashioned, moralizing tale for the young, is a lime-burner in the mountains of New England. Compassion for mankind and reverence for "the sanctity of the human heart" lead him, in his solitude, to meditation; meditation in turn evokes from the blazing furnace of his lime-kiln, whose door is the entrance to the infernal regions, the arch-fiend. Under Satan's tutelage, compassion and reverence give way to a "hungry dream of knowledge" that slips farther and farther from its origins and, breaking loose from them, becomes the frigid intellectual curiosity of the Spectator. Brand leaves his mountains and

[1]Extracted from a work in progress on American literature. A short preliminary version of this essay was published as the article "Ethan Brand" in Volume 8 of the *Dizionario Letterario Bompiani* (Bompiani, Milan, 1950).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wanders about the world in search of The Unpardonable Sin: "some mode of guilt which could be neither atoned for nor forgiven." When he returns, eighteen years later, he has found it: within himself.

In the moral universe of which Hawthorne is the historian, and over whose demise he pronounces an equivocal funeral address, there is only one such mode of guilt: that of passing "beyond" the *condition humaine*. All other modes—adultery, murder, theft, the gamut of Cardinal Sins—are rather evidences of that condition. Arising from the sources of life itself, they issue from and re-enact an obscure "original" guilt with which, for Hawthorne as for Greek tragedians and Jewish and Christian fabulists before him, the "drama" designated in the western world by the term Human Life symbolically begins. Inseparable from such life, the sins of men make known their presence as rot makes known the presence of organic matter. ("Puisqu'on est des êtres humains, comment ne pas faire des cochonneries?"[2]) They have, therefore, a peculiar value as tributes paid to the nature of the human lot; are gestures of immersion in it and submission to it; have, indeed, "a sanctity of their own"; are "sacraments". Only the passage beyond is unforgivable: not the violation of sacraments (since to violate them is still to acknowledge their force), but the repudiation or dismissal of their sacramental character. It is unforgivable precisely because it is "beyond" forgiveness as it is beyond everything else contained in the "drama".

It is this passage beyond—*its* nature, together with its meaning and its supposed consequences—that is the theme of "Ethan Brand". In a somewhat different way, it is also the theme of Melville's *Moby Dick*.[3] A career devoted to representing, in symbolic Romances[4] or tales, a certain "natural history of the soul"—the savage and inexorable processes, functions, move-

[2]Dostoyevsky, in a letter quoted by Gide.

[3]Though neither of these two works, written at the same time, owes anything to the other, each may be read as a commentary on the other—and on "sources" of American literature not usually mentioned by historians.

[4]The name given by Hawthorne to his longer prose narratives: a *genre* closer to the fairy-tale, fable, or legend than to the realistic novel. In his Prefaces, the author clearly and insistently distinguishes it from the novel. In the most important of the so-called novels of Hawthorne's successor, Henry James, this special *genre*, along with the special moral and imaginative preoccupations that required it, achieves something like perfect expression.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ments, and "laws" that constitute the human condition—began with the discovery that, in America at least, if not yet in Europe, this outmoded servitude could be dispensed with: that the traditional elements of what is called Human Life—the "soul", the "heart", the "person"—and the causes of man's traditional bondage—those principles of organic substance which force upon a particular life its particular identity, continuity, and coherence—were on their way to becoming mechanical diagrams, statistical tables, verbal formulas, or antique bibelots fancied by connoisseurs; that the internal forms which Hawthorne thought common to such diverse renderings of Human Life as the Old and New Testaments, Greek tragedy, the dramas of Shakespeare, and his own Romances (we might add for him: the works of Freud), were already ceasing to be forms in which life was lived or apprehended, and becoming simply interchangeable pieces in a game of ingenious and gratuitous combinations; that, finally, one last stroke—the sacrifice of a few moral and sentimental habits, indefensible vestiges of piety—would suffice to liberate what had been the "human person" from his old enslavement, and to project him wholly outside it, into some "unpeopled world beyond the sun" from which "Human Life" is seen as a curious object in interstellar space.

Developments and variations of the theme dealt with in "Ethan Brand" make up a sizable part of the author's work. For almost everything of importance in Hawthorne that is not a rendering of the "natural history of the soul" (a definition, that is, from "inside", of the human state and the "dark necessities" to which it is subject), is a rendering of that which, because not yet in this sense human (animal, faun), is not yet burdened with the soul and its cruel natural history, or of that which, because it has gone beyond—"outside"—the dense destructive medium of human life (Spectator, scientist, technician of souls and societies), is burdened by them no longer.

Almost everything else of importance in Hawthorne has to do with the way these three states—the pre-human, the human, and the post-human—metamorphose into one another.

A modern reader can accept as charming much in Hawthorne that has gone out of style: the simplicity of his art, which suggests that of medieval wood-engraving, the archaism of his verbal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and dramatic lexicon, the leisureliness of his rhythms, the odd mixture, in his prose, of rusticity with elegance. But there is a sense in which the author of "Ethan Brand", like the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—published in the same year—is so old-fashioned that he can no longer be read without a smile. Neither of these two writers can conceive acts of the flesh or events in the spirit apart from some traditional context—theological, ethical, emotional, literary—that foists upon what we now know to be simply a neutral "datum" (or "phenomenon") an irrelevant and useless imaginative charge. Mrs. Stowe can not imagine her slave-driver, Simon Legree, whipping a slave, without at the same time imagining for him the visceral shudder that ought to accompany bestiality, the moral intoxication of knowing that he does evil; his acts have a resonance in the flesh and in the spirit which the modern reader, knowing it to be superfluous, calls "melodramatic". Melodramatic, tender-hearted, simple-minded Hawthorne can not imagine Ethan Brand shaking loose from his human bondage and ascending to the "star-lit eminence" from which he looks down over the kingdoms of the earth, without designating the act, in horror, as The Unpardonable Sin, without imagining for the agent the ecstasy of power and the diabolical pride of those who arrogate to themselves prerogatives reserved for the author of creation. He must attribute to Brand's more than human condition precisely the moral, sentimental, imaginative, "human" weight that the hero is said to have cast off. Coldness, beyond human feeling, is said to characterize his sin, but he suffers intolerably by the knowledge that he is cold; his frigidity can not be distinguished from the agony of a soul frying in Hell.

All this dates the author. The personage whom he calls Ethan Brand and endows with so extravagant an intensity is familarly known to us, a hundred years later, as a decent, honest, ordinary, industrious, law-abiding citizen. None of us is likely to accuse of "violating the sanctity of the human heart" an innocent entomologist (say) who, becoming an innocent sociologist, gives us valuable information about the sexual behavior of the human male; nor are we likely to attribute to so dispassionate a worker in the cause of enlightenment the diabolical pride, the ecstasy, and the agony of an Unpardonable Sinner.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

2. *Portraits From a Family Album*[5]

DAISY MILLER. Heroine of the nouvelle of the same name (1878) by the American writer, Henry James (1843-1916). A rich, pretty, "typical" American girl on a tour of Europe stops over at Vevey and has with the narrator of the tale what appears to be a flirtation; moving on to Rome, she has a second "flirtation" with an heiress-hunter, Giovanelli; on a moonlight visit to the Colosseum she catches malaria; and she dies. The heroine of this fragile, glittering little narrative, which might be mistaken for a comedy of manners, is surpassed only by other personages of James as a study in the most elusive singularities of an American mind. The bewilderment that she arouses in the narrator, an expatriate American who has been away from home too long, is the bewilderment that Europeans, accustomed to one or another traditional mode of formal coherence in thought, sentiment, morals, conduct, manners, and speech, still feel in the presence of such minds. Winterbourne is as baffled by "the girl's sudden familiarities and caprices" as he is enchanted by her freshness; her "character" eludes every mode of understanding he is able to apply to it. Her "bright, sweet, superficial little visage", while not insipid, expresses nothing that his European education has prepared him to recognize. The cool directness of her gaze suggests the stare of a prostitute sizing up a client, but her behavior is that of a virginal schoolgirl. Her frankness is too outrageous to be thought true, but it dissimulates nothing. Words inconceivable in the mouth of a rich young lady, except as tactical counters for some game of erotic hide-and-seek in the ante-rooms of consciousness, turn out to be pure of *arrière-pensée*. Each of her gestures is more or less familiar to him as a gesture made at some time, in some place, by someone, but it has neither its original sense nor any other sense that he can make out. More puzzling still, it has no apparent relation to the gestures that precede and follow it; and the sum of her gestures makes no comprehensible ensemble. With her naive

[5]Fragments of a work in progress on American literature. These "portraits" were originally composed for an Italian encyclopaedia of literary personages—Volume 8 of the *Dizionario Letterario Bompiani* (Milan, 1950). They are printed here, with the permission of Mr. Valentino Bompiani, in their original form.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

informality she mixes odds and ends from a dozen different lexicons of social formality, placed side by side, like variously colored beads, as if syntax and grammar for these lexicons were unknown. Winterbourne's instincts as a human being acquainted with the "natural" internal movements of human beings prove useless; his knowledge of European social forms only leads him astray. And his perplexity is well founded. For Daisy is unaware not just of social forms, but of "form" itself in its most elementary organic and physiological senses. Though she is the American "natural woman" par excellence, she is scarcely less remote from anything that Europeans have ever called Nature than from anything they have ever called Woman: the last word about both, from the sum of the Continent's authoritative pens, is not yet the first word about Daisy: absent from the life of her spirit (one suspects, too, from that of her flesh) is every principle of formal coherence—rhythm, structure, continuity, ordonnance—that may in any age have served to identify either. No internal need of this spirit requires that a movement once begun proceed along its dramatic or "psychological" trajectory—unless she chooses; all such movements may be taken up or broken off at will; all are equally at her disposal, like some collection of phonograph records, to be "played" from any point, in any order, in any place, at any time; and no private conformation of Daisy's spirit determines the movements that are and are not "her own." Adventuress? Man-hunter? *Comédienne?* Nothing of the kind: the most charming little creature in the world. And the most innocent. Her innocence is immaculate: she does nothing to safeguard it, for she can not conceive of its being soiled. She does not grasp other people's suspicions of her virtue as in fact suspicions about her. Between herself and what Winterbourne understands to be the materials of which human life is made she maintains without effort the moral distance of the perfectly detached spectator from an amusing comedy. It does not occur to her that a suitor's declaration or a dowager's insult may have anything to do with herself: she hears the words of the suitor as if they were a soliloquy—quaint or funny or sad—spoken for her entertainment; she admires the insult as a *tour de force.* She maintains the same moral distance between herself and the acts which she herself performs, seeing them as acts wholly independent of her,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with which she has no real relation and for which she is not responsible: they too are spectacles presented for her entertainment, like the Château de Chillon and the Alps. And she can not imagine that these acts should have consequences, nor that they should be parts of a general whole, since for her they are "pure" acts, without future or past. Her superb animal health is accompanied by neither the animal appetite nor the capacity for animal pleasure that it suggests. Her exuberance, her spontaneity, her physical grace, her impertinence, her *élan*, are pure flashing surfaces, like peacock feathers without a peacock, all of whose life resides in the gratuitous play of their iridescence; they refer to nothing beyond or behind themselves; signify nothing; demand nothing in return; are detached alike from recognizable motives or origins in the spirit and from resonance in time. She is always on her way "elsewhere"—not because the place where she is displeases her, nor because she wishes to be in some other place, but because her life, like the "life" of a gyroscope, is held together only by a continuous state of motion: motion of the body or its members; motion of the mind darting among scattered and unrelated points; motion of the tongue generating words that issue from no particular thought or sentiment but are simply proofs of motion; motion of the personage across seas, countries, continents, and peoples that she can not distinguish from one another and that are without meaning to her except as souvenirs of her having been somewhere. Penetrating nothing, penetrated by nothing, she moves over the surface of human life like a fly on an infinite sheet of glass; and it is this absolute detachment, this absolute freedom to "see" everything and be contaminated by nothing, that constitutes her moral honor. She carries with her as she moves the tribal sanctities of the American nomad: kindness, generosity, the candor of those whose encounters must be too brief for intimacy or deceit. These are the substance without form of her buoyant little moral universe, and only by disrespect toward them can she be touched. The stiff expatriate society of Rome wounds this airy substance with an automatic operation of social form that Daisy grasps only as "unkindness". She does not grasp at all its scandalized accusation that she is Giovanelli's mistress; for sexual intimacy, which she finds picturesque in others, is beyond her power to imagine for herself. It is therefore

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not this accusation which, on her deathbed, she feels it urgent to deny, but rather an innocent suggestion of Winterbourne's that for her is indeed scandalous: the suggestion that she loves, or is engaged to, Giovanelli. For to love or to be "engaged" would be a terrible blot upon her honor: a shameful descent into the gross malodorous substance of human life, a surrender to its bondage, an acceptance of human limits to her absolute metaphysical freedom.

J. WARD MOOREHOUSE. Personage of the three-volume "novel", *U. S. A.* (1930-37), by the American writer, John Dos Passos (1896-). The disciple upon whom falls the mantle of this messiah *à l'américaine* says of him that he has "perhaps done more than any one living man, whether you like what he does or not, to form the public mind in this country." Perhaps. Perhaps, also, recent American literature has created no figure so extraordinary in its symbolic resonance and so terrifying in its symbolic truth. Devoid of everything that, in the Christian and humanistic traditions of Europe, makes up the "identity" of a human person—except a body (which he wants to forget) and a name (which is false)—he incarnates a "metaphysic" of a new kind of world. He makes his appearance in the first volume as one of the work's twelve "typical" Americans; the generic nature of their lives, defined through the figure of Mac, achieves in Moorehouse a bizarre perfection; his presence soon dominates them and the work.

Born in the east, of petit-bourgeois, 100% American parents, he has an uneventful childhood—there are no "events" in *U. S. A.*, only incidents. He graduates from high-school as class orator; helps the family budget as a travelling book-salesman; goes for a short time to college; and takes a job in a real-estate office. At twenty, he is an ordinary, good-looking, blonde-headed, "bright", enterprising young American who does not smoke or drink and is "keeping himself clean for the lovely girl" whom he shall some day no doubt marry. He marries twice, into wealth; works as a newspaper reporter, as advertising manager for a hardware company, and, during the first World War, as a European publicity agent for the Red Cross; opens an office in New York; becomes a ubiquitous go-between in financial,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

industrial, and governmental affairs; rises to success as an advertising executive and "Public Relations Counsel"; and disappears from the book, in old age, as a powerful and mysterious "man behind the scenes" of American public life.

But the "success" is not of this earth, the "power" is theocratic, the "mystery" sacerdotal. A religious vocation that resembles both genius and a blind physiological reflex—and into which enters neither a will to power nor a desire for personal gain—summons him, as the voice of the Lord summons Biblical prophets, to do its supernatural bidding: to liberate man in America from all sensual or spiritual intimacy with the gross malodorous substance of human life. Practising—though not understanding—a system of tribal magic whose origins go back at least to Benjamin Franklin, the tribal wizard, Moorehouse, transforms the base ore of human experience into Byzantium's celestial gold: into "conventions" or verbal formulas which, because they have nothing to do with the nature of experience, can not be tried against it, are absolutely pure, and have the force of magic charms. Subjecting to his will the impure, harmful facts of human experience, rendering them by his magic impotent to touch the body or penetrate the mind except as he has transformed them, he realizes a dream, older than Franklin, of freeing mankind from its immemorial bondage to the human condition. He does not knowingly aim so high. His boyhood ambition is merely to be a writer of popular songs. But in the age of Moorehouse the "popular song" has begun to be something different from an expression, more or less formal, in rhymed verses and music, of popular sentiments. It has become, on the one hand, a mass-produced article of commerce, like the household gadget, which does not so much satisfy a need as create a need for itself; and on the other hand a product—often ingenious and sometimes brilliant, but neither expressing nor issuing from any sentiment actually felt—of an inventive fantasy devoted to fabricating new "sentiments" in order that they may be, if not felt, entertained. The writing of popular songs—though Moorehouse does not become a song-writer—is his apprenticeship in the variety of popular magic that he will later practise. He performs the same magic operation, without rhyme, as the author of a rhapsodic brochure for a real-estate development; and it is to the perfecting of this operation, which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

becomes in time a veritable *operatio spiritualis,* that he dedicates the rest of his career. Difficult to describe, like all forms of magic, it consists, roughly, in substituting for every possible intimate (hence contaminating) relation between flesh or spirit and the sentiments, thoughts, persons, places, things, events, movements, processes, acts that are the traditional substance of their lives, a mass of pure conventions, verbal formulas, ritual artefacts, and magic charms. These he assembles, as if composing a Surrealist canvas, from the junk heaps of human civilizations: broken phrases, tangled metaphors, rusty fragments of ideas, pieces of sentiment twisted like old bed-springs, fossil relics of rhetorical and dramatic organisms, shattered bottles that had once held scents of the world's body, torn bits of newspaper, pages of sheet-music, water-soaked calendars showing Christmas on the farm, plaster of ruined churches, cracked concrete posts from the gates of Heaven and Hell. Whatever was not yet in a junk-heap becomes junk when Moorehouse finds it, and promptly thereafter, gold. As the scope of this operation widens to embrace every aspect of American life and culture, Moorehouse becomes the high-priest of a new national religion: Publicity. Its worship takes various forms; the most "formalized" of them—oratory, song-writing, salesmanship, "promotion", journalism, advertising, "public relations" (though not the films) —are those practised by him. All have a common "metaphysical" basis and a common system of tactical manoeuver (serving a common "moral" ideal) for preventing the contamination of the faithful by human life: the conversion of human life, past and present, at home or abroad, into "pure conventions"; the substitution of these both for a direct experience of things and for those impure conventions—impure because they express or conceal some "reality" behind themselves—without which no experience is possible; the creation, from these pure elements, of a hermetic, suspended, supernatural "other world", which has for the Americans of Dos Passos a reality superior to that of any world—natural, supernatural, or conventional—previously known to man. At the center of this world, continuously renewing it, keeping it in motion, is Moorehouse—messiah, prophet, wizard, high-priest, and mediating god. The Americans of Dos Passos, having no lives and no identities of their own through which they might communicate with one another, may

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nevertheless, through Him, enjoy the sense of communicating: the conventions and formulas that he interposes among them are in effect a common language available to all. Nothing, to be sure, is "expressed" in this language by anyone to anyone about anything—except the language itself; but the semblance of communication is maintained. No one questions it but "Intellectuals", who reject the messiah as a fraud—"a big bluff . . . a goddam megaphone . . . a damn publicity agent." But the scoffers, having no language or religion that is more valid, drink themselves to death in bewilderment and despair. For businessmen, industrialists, financiers and workers, for statesmen, politicians, diplomats, for readers of magazines and newspapers, he creates possibilities of "agreement"; through him they "contact" (even the word is new) but do not touch or contaminate one another; he redeems them from discord or from solitude with an illusion of speaking the same tongue. No more than the public that he serves can he dispense with his publicity. Only through the opaque screen of his magic formulas can he "see" or interpret what is before him, what happens to him, what he himself does: which is to say, he sees nothing and interprets nothing but Publicity. A sacred obligation requires that he transform, like all else, the data of his own existence—even his rudimentary animal needs—into pure conventions (which may be conventional images of himself as a mediating god); he offers them to a public that may be his wife, his mistress, his secretary, his clients, ten million readers of a weekly magazine, or himself; and he is liberated from the human reality that might otherwise take diabolical possession of him and call into question the absolute authority of his will. His "interpretations", however grotesque their incongruity with the facts known to an outsider—to the author and reader of *U. S. A.*—are in no sense hypocritical; for the complex moral action that bears the name "hypocrisy" is beyond his power to execute as it is beyond his power to conceive; his moral innocence (which is to say, his inaccessibility to moral knowledge) is perfect. The gap between his perfectly non-moral actions and the righteous morality of his words, between the facts that he confronts and the formulas or conventions with which he designates them, soon widens to a gulf across which neither of the two parties to this strange double game has the smallest communication with the other: his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

right hand, in all good faith, would not dream of asking what his left hand is up to. Each, as the book advances, becomes more and more pure, more and more independent of the other; and the play of their irrelevance to each other becomes a vast metaphysical comedy. Unlike certain of his literary antecedents (e.g. Babbitt), he is never troubled by a vestigial human longing to feel within himself the reality of his own life. The formula or convention has indeed, for him, an exclusive claim upon the real—and a real force—so evident as to render merely querulous any counter-claim that facts might have the presumption to advance. The notion that his life might have any reality other than that of the conventional words and images he substitutes for it does not occur to him. Not less than his external public does he "believe" his own publicity; his belief is an unfaltering religious faith: *Credo quia absurdum*. But between the believer and the objects of his belief—between Moorehouse and his conventions, his interpretations, his formulas, his images—there is, notwithstanding, a distance as great as that which separates both him and them from the traditional "reality" for which they have been substituted. The words spoken by his mouth are none of his concern; detached from them as from all else, he is not responsible for them and has no obligation to them. Since they are no more and no less than Words, nothing is to be gained if (as sometimes happens) they turn out to be descriptions of the truth, nothing lost if events prove them to be false: the question of truth or falsehood is simply beside the point. His detachment, indeed—his freedom from the bondage of the human condition—would also be perfect, were not its Byzantine purity marred by the exasperating persistence of his flesh: by the shameful indignities of hunger, desire, digestion, indigestion, excretion, seasickness, corpulence, and physical decay. The physiological details that serve as points of reference for the discontinuous narrative of his life are, however, the only details of this "life" that have an internal relation to one another or that give to it an organic continuity: the blonde hair turns white, the large body takes on fat, the cheeks fall into jowls. Apart from them, the "life" of Moorehouse is wholly a public fact—a creation of Publicity. He exists from childhood only as a sequence of names and images in other minds. Christened John Ward, he grows up as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Johnny, introduces himself to social superiors as John, passes the war years as Major Moorehouse, is married to his "aristocratic" first wife as J. Ward (so much more "distinguished"), is known to her as Ward ("John" is awfully plebian, isn't it?), adopts J. Ward as his final and definitive name, and allows trusted employees or important clients to call him "J. W." Each name is accompanied by one or more conventional public masks; he "memorizes" for each, and in turn creates for it, a conventional lexicon of manners, costumes, formalities, phrases, opinions, intonations, and gestures. He discovers, as a young man, that he has a usable "pair of bright blue eyes" and can put on at will "an engaging boyish look." He learns as he grows older how to wear Scotch tweeds or a uniform, how to dictate speeches in a private railroad car, how to play golf with "executives", smoke cigars at a conference table, order tea from a French valet, surround himself with telephones and stenographers, talk with the quiet drawl of a Southern senator, frown thoughtfully, nod doubtfully, smile faintly, and twinkle knowingly his now pale and bovine eyes. Unaware of any distinction between himself and the rôles he plays—a *comédien malgré lui*—he plays them with the dedicated but effortless pertinacity of a man divinely chosen and divinely gifted with absolute freedom of choice: the "personage" named Moorehouse is the sum of the rôles that he plays, the magic operation that he performs, and the supernatural "necessity" of which he is the chosen instrument. The name "J. Ward Moorehouse" once fixed, the nondescript individual born Moorehouse once wholly consumed by his sacred office, he indulges in small harmless lapses from priestly rigor: mitigates the religious austerity of his presence in the public mind by creating images of himself that are less awesome and mysterious and remote; cultivates for the delectation of privileged fellow-tribesmen (and himself) "characteristic" foibles by which they may identify him, and a repertoire of conventional sentiments—nostalgia, regret, loneliness, arcadian longing, parental solicitude, marital distress—by which they may grasp him as a creature like themselves after all. Not less detached from these than if he knew them to be fictions, he does not doubt that they are true. They are as true as the fact that, having no humanly conceivable existence, he exists.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

R. P. BLACKMUR

The Atlantic Unites

HENRY ADAMS' LIFELONG INTEREST IN American foreign policy only began to take specific shape during the troubles with Spain over Cuba during the middle nineties and only developed into something like systematic thought under the pressure of the Boxer Affair after his friend John Hay had become Secretary of State in 1901. His private relations with Hay had afforded him the opportunity of at least pressing his opinions on the levers of action. He had an avenue to power, which was not blocked till the end of the vista, in the one case by President Cleveland and in the other by a combination of Hay's weakness and what Hay called the fault of the American people, which had better be called their blindness. With the new administration, even the avenue was closed, or at any rate stopped short. Roosevelt was his own Secretary of State and often his own State Department; Hay had the anxiety without the power, the control of detail without the right of initiative. Whether by consequence or by accident, Adams began to look, not through Roosevelt, but beyond him; not so much at the situations which Roosevelt contrived as at the situations which must eventuate no matter who made contrivances.

Looking at the general drama of the international conflict of forces from a specifically American point of view, Adams came gradually to single out as the force most to be taken account of, the huge mass of Russia. He got the single idea "that Russia must fatally roll—must by her irresistible inertia, crush whatever stood in her way. . . . For Hay and his pooling policy, inherited from McKinley, the fatalism of Russian inertia meant the failure of American intensity." The movement of Russia eastward into China would leave the Atlantic powers, with whom America was in fact associated—whether in peace, or war, or in what is called "isolation", under the necessity of dealing "with a vast continental mass of inert motion, like a glacier." The American must measure the mass; which was to ask a question, or rather two questions felt as one. "Was volume or intensity the stronger? What and where was the *vis nova* that could hold its own before this pro-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

digious ice-cap of *vis inertiae?* What was movement of inertia, and what its laws?"

The provisional answer seemed simple. Matter at rest, rested; matter in motion, moved. The mind, which here concerned Adams rather than matter, was clearly restless and wayward in motion, and moved according to motives. "So long as these motives were habitual, and their attraction regular, the consequent result might, for convenience, be called movement of inertia, to distinguish it from movement caused by newer or higher attraction; but the greater the bulk to move, the greater must be the force to accelerate or deflect it." The answer, said Adams, "seemed simple as running water; but simplicity is the most deceitful mistress that ever betrayed man." And a few pages further on he gave an example of simplicity that has turned out perhaps more deceitful—or at any rate more ambiguous—than Adams expected; an example which we need only supplement with a modest preface.

Shortly after the elder Roosevelt became president, Hay wrote to Adams: "Theodore said the other day, 'I am not going to be slave of the tradition that forbids Presidents from seeing their friends. I am going to dine with you and Henry Adams and Clarence whenever I like. But' (here the shadow of the crown sobered him a little), 'of course I must preserve the prerogative of the initiative!' " King died and never got to the White House, but Adams dined there on January 10, 1902, after an interval of some twenty-one years, since February 17, 1881, when he and his wife got upset "gorging on Potomac" water—which was all Mrs. Hayes ever served to drink. It is curious that in remembering this dinner, Adams got his companions at table straight but was three years wrong as to date. But both dinners were nightmares, whether in memory or immediate sensation. Writing Mrs. Cameron with both in mind Adams put it: "To say that I enjoyed it would be, to you, a gratuitous piece of deceit. The dinner was indifferent, very badly served, and, for some reason, nothing to drink but a glass of sherry, and some apollinaris. Theodore's talk was not exactly forced or unnatural, but had less of his old freshness and quite as much of his old dogmatism." The president preserved the prerogative of the initiative. Adams went on. "Really, Theodore is exasperating even to me, and always was. His want of tact hurts Congressmen and Senators more than it does me, but what annoys me is his childlike and infantile superficiality with his boyish dog-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

matism of assertion. He lectures me on history as though he were a high-school pedagogue. Of course, I fall back instantly on my favorite protective pose of ignorance, which aggravates his assertions, and so we drift steadily apart."

Two years later, almost to the day, Adams was at the White House again—this time at the diplomatic reception with supper afterwards—and the assertion of the prerogative had only, as Adams reported to Mrs. Cameron, been intensified. "Never have I had an hour of worse social *malaise*. We were overwhelmed in a torrent of oratory, and at last I heard only the repetition of I—I—I!—attached to indiscretions greater one than another. . . . The worst of it is that it is mere cerebral excitement, of normal, or at least habitual nature. It has not the excuse of champagne. The wild talk about everything—Panama, Russia, Germany, England, and whatever else suggested itself,—belonged not to the barroom but to the asylum. What is curious is that the Russians are talking just as indiscreetly or more so. We are a boy's school run wild."

"What is one to do?" Adams asked. "Play Seneca to Theodonero?" Whether the suicide of intelligence was social, moral or political,—or all three—was less the question than the Russo-Japanese war which then hung in the balance, and which made, until the balance was struck, every value questionable. With Washington the political centre of the world, as he thought, and Roosevelt heading Washington, Adams was "half crazy with fear" that Russia was about to precipitate another French Revolution that would upset all Europe and America too. Roosevelt might make every difference, because he represented, by his office, every possibility.

It was President Roosevelt himself who made the simple answer to Adam's question about the relative values of volume and intensity, and he made it at the same dinner, seen through three years perspective, as that just reported to Mrs. Cameron. The two reports are worth taking together, for what is said in the *Education* adds insight to the immediate irritation in the letter. The insight is not into Roosevelt's character but into the character of American power. The president said that the war between Russia and Japan "was imminent; that it ought to be stopped; that it could be stopped: 'I could do it myself; I could stop it tomorrow!' and he went on to explain his reasons for restraint. . . . That he was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

right, and that, within another generation, his successor would do what he would have liked to do, made no shadow of doubt in the mind of his hearer. . .; but the listener cared less for the assertion of power, than for the vigor of view. The truth was evident enough, ordinary, even commonplace if one liked, but it was not a truth of inertia, nor was the method to be mistaken for inert." America, then, represented intensity, though not necessarily intelligent intensity; but America for the moment, and in mere fact, stood outside the orbit of action in which Russia and Japan made a trial of future struggle. "The forces thus launched were bound to reach some new equilibrium which would prove the problem in one sense or another." In the new equilibrium America would be an effective weight; but so long as the old equilibrium seemed to continue, America had only the iterated *I—I—I—*! of President Roosevelt.

These remarks, with the implications here drawn from them, may be taken as a picture in little of all that Adams thought about world policy from 1895 till the day he made the last correction on the proofs of the *Education.* The picture was dramatic, and the drama was double. The drama he saw was the relatively blind struggle for power; the drama he wanted to see was the struggle for true empire which was relatively intelligent. From the two dramas seen together, the problem of the practical statesman was to create a policy which should convert as much as possible of the blind struggle into the terms of the intelligent struggle, and which, at the same time, should take account of the probability that a good part of the forces at work were inconvertible into the terms of any known intelligence. Thus, policy was a kind of *tertium quid*, never quite known but always at hand: the third thing seen as about to rise from the contact of the known and the unknown, the intense and the inert forces. To envisage such a policy required of Adams the habit of looking ahead, not once but again and again, to see how, sometime, the principles he felt behind him could be re-enacted as the values of the future. But the habit of looking ahead left him lonely, and in loneliness no man can be certain of what he sees; for loneliness is a kind of dark which while it sharpens the eyes, never sharpens them enough. The best prophet has a perpetual squint, which is part of what he sees.

In estimating the *tertium quid* of Adams' prophecies of policy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for a true empire, it is necessary not so much to discount the squint as to know what it is; for it is sometimes an idiom of thought, sometimes a sentiment, and sometimes a kind of representative gesture of the conditions under which he did his thinking. He thought always, for example, as an outsider at the heart of things: as the man who knew, and who was responsive to what he knew, but who had no direct influence upon the actions of which, by his presence, he was a part. The remove at which he worked cast him in the role of historian to a story which was either still going on or had not yet happened; and the effect of that role was that he tended, alternately, to exaggerate the inadequacy of individual statesmen, or to assert the primacy of natural forces over the movements of society. For example, writing to Hay (15 September 1903) about the deadlock in the Balkans, he said: "Our acts evidently decide themselves mechanically, not as a consequence of will or thought, but of a situation; they are *ex post facto,* and all governments wait for the post-office, and inquire for the fact." That is one side of this aspect of his squint; the alternative aspect is seen in his regular underestimation of the *intelligence* of Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt. From these two, as they alternate, other habits of vision follow by nature. With Adams, destruction, if he happened to think of it, was always imminent. He tended to think that all processes, except those of intelligence, were likely to accelerate beyond the examples of experience. He thought the long-range rifles first employed in the Boer War might bring all war to an end because men would not fight against weapons they could not see. But that was a casual thought; more seriously, and on second thought, he considered that the British Empire was politically bankrupt because its economic system depended on a shrinking yield from foreign investments. Even more seriously, he held from time to time that the mechanical processes of society had not only become automatic but had also obliterated the imaginative processes which put the mechanism together. Here he mistook a change of phase for destruction, a change in the task of imagination for its superannuation; and failed to allow for the drags and brakes of merely human inertia which always impede and sometimes deflect merely mechanical processes. He tended, that is, to see as catastrophically or completely significant what was only indicatively or generally significant; and he carried the tendency so far that he sometimes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saw, as in the passages about Theodore Roosevelt cited above, the lapses or excesses of individuals as representing the whole society which in fact they only helped to compose.

Such were the components of the Adams squint which we have to discount when we estimate his vision of foreign affairs; but there was another component which was the supreme virtue for a man in Adams' position of stable-mate to statesmen. From all his squint he had the intermittent power to recover clear vision. When the strain of the squint became intolerable, he saw his series of forces in perspective both with each other and with the long train of history. What he recovered was the sense of imaginative possibility and probability in the affairs of a world society. He could both see necessity and conceive choice, and from the interaction of the two he could make provisional commitments ahead of the foreign offices and the post offices of the world. That he might misjudge necessity and misconceive choice were only the risks of the imagination in the great venture of looking ahead; the rewards were infinitely greater than the risks, for the rewards came in the sense of response and responsibility that go with the habit of looking ahead and in the blessed possibility that in so looking one might help to create, perhaps by actual anticipation, the shape of the human future. No man was free enough of squint to see right, but if one looked hard and long enough one might at least see wrong what was actually taking place. Adams had the luck and the vitality of imagination to see a great deal.

What he saw, by the accident of the Russo-Japanese War and the further accident that the instrument of its settlement lay in American hands, was Russia. The fall of Port Arthur and the peace of Portsmouth brought Russia into direct relations with America both in the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans; and to Adams, looking ahead, the problems of true empire lay between, in the task of making those relations orderly and just. The world had come again to a condition like that in which Augustus found Rome when he began his great effort to establish a universal empire on the bases of universal peace and universal suffrage. The condition was similar but the forces were different, and their field wider, though the conflicts between them were no sharper. It remained to be seen what new solutions would be proposed, what new mistakes would be made, what old failures would be re-enacted, and what new miraculous triumph of survival would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

occur. Adams could look backwards with his idol and master, Gibbon, and the half of him that saw dissolution and decay habitually did so. To Adams Theodore Roosevelt looked through Nero's eyeglasses, and he asked himself should he play Seneca to Theodonero, just as he asked if Russia were about to overwhelm the world with an oriental or a socialist despotism and whether America, in struggling with Russia, would adopt Russian methods "in order to be swallowed by Russia as a chicken is saliva'd in order to be swallowed by a boa." In short, would the world of 1900 follow the course of the Roman Empire? But the other half of Adams asked continuously a different set of questions and made a different set of speculations, both in the face of the facts of existing conflicts of force and interest as he could see them, and all based on the hope of establishing a world-wide concert of those conflicts. He tried to devise means of getting along—of general survival—in spite of, and in terms of, those conflicts; he never ignored them, but always tried to use them, for he saw that those conflicts, as they were put into concert, must be themselves the cohesive forces of any durable world, and he always tried to allow for the probable failure of that hope by addressing himself to each problem as if its best practicable solution could be only a *modus vivendi* subject to disruption by violence. That is, he never risked formulating a universal policy except in terms of American values because he saw as the highest probability that the world would divide, in the struggle for empire, into two mutually repellent centres of force of which one would be America.

It was on this probability that he shaped his policy and his prophecy, and it was with this probability as yardstick that he estimated the value of facts. Thus his suggestions for action looked to a final struggle which he hoped might be avoided. His suggestions followed either one of his two maxims, depending on whether hope was high or low: that a stateman should lead where his country must necessarily go, and that "the road of a true policy is always that of least resistance." The question was what constituted necessity and what resistance and at what point did human intent override necessity and resistance? The only sure thing was the struggle between them.

The struggle showed clearly in the shifting of relative positions of the great powers in the questions that chiefly troubled the world between 1895 and 1905: the near eastern question of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Turkey and Persia and the Isthmus of Suez, the Caribbean question and the Isthmus of Panama, the Balkan question and the mastery of Europe, the Chinese question and the mastery of the Pacific. Until 1898, which brought her into the Southern Pacific, America took no direct interest in any of these questions; after 1898, she found herself, though not altogether consciously, deeply concerned in them all and in the pattern of relations successively taken up by the great powers then consciously concerned in them. The mastery of Europe and the mastery of the Pacific were two aspects of the mastery of the world of which America had become a chief part. How integral her relation was may be shown in an extract from one of a series of letters from Cecil Spring Rice, then in charge of the British Embassy at St. Petersburg, to the President's wife at Washington. These letters with others to Roosevelt and Hay were unofficial dispatches from Great Britain to America and the answers were filed in the British Foreign Office. In the letter in question, dated 13 March 1905, Spring Rice wrote Mrs. Roosevelt about the Tsar: "His ideas, if he has any, are to maintain the autocracy undiminished and to continue the war until he has gained the 'mastery of the Pacific'. Where is America?" Spring Rice and his government wanted America to swing her weight in concert with that of the British Empire for precisely the same reasons that the British had been prepared to give America full support against the threatened intervention by Russia and Germany during the Spanish War: to the British mind the two powers had common interests above their conflicting interests, both sets of interests being world-wide, not only in the economical but also in the political sense. The free world-market (industrial competition controlled only by law) could only be maintained if the *Pax Britannica* (peace by conciliation and law, with military force as a reserved resort) were also maintained, and the *Pax Britannica* could no longer be maintained without American help. Against the rising threat of military competition and the despotic state, neither industrial competition nor the parliamentary state could stand if Britain and America acted separately. Together, with their combined military reserve apparent, they might. Hence the legitimacy of Spring Rice's question in March, 1905: "Where is America?"

By 1905, or at any time after 1900, Adams could have asked the same question in the same tone and in hope of the same answer

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in response to approximately the same set of facts similarly understood. Before the Spanish War his answers would have been very different for he was then what is nowadays called an isolationist, though of an eastern sea-board rather than a middle-western variety. Almost the first reference in his letters to an American foreign policy, dated 5 June 1895, is strongly isolationist in its tone and nationalistic in its argument. It was the mind of John Quincy Adams of the year 1820 at work without readjustment to new forces. "I think it time," he wrote to his brother Brooks, "that the political existence of England should cease in North America. Whether we can allow it to develop in South America, particularly on the Orinoco, is a matter that will depend on England herself." These remarks were prompted by Adams' partisan struggle for free silver, which he held necessary if the irresponsible financial power of the international bankers was to be overthrown; they also reflected a sense, gained from Brooks Adams' *Law of Civilization and Decay,* of which he was then reading the manuscript, that the British administration of a gold-standard international economy left America in an unfavorable competitive position in the world market. The same sentiments prompted further remarks, also to Brooks Adams, six months later, that the country must break and go bankrupt with respect to gold. "Of course I want it to break. I see no hope of safety except in severing the ties that connect it with Europe, and in fortifying ourselves as an independent centre. Bankruptcy is a political gain."

These remarks, so apparently out of line with Adams' later major objectives in foreign policy, have been quoted not only to show how far his policy developed, but also because the sentiments that underlay the remarks never entirely disappeared from his mind. Suspicion of British motives and dislike of British methods in everything except European affairs were permanent habits of feeling; about England he was always of two minds. But he was of two minds also about America and indeed about the world, and the two minds were much the same in all three fields, and the conflict of the two minds was what made it impossible for him ever to settle on a single policy. What left him so ill at heart in his ambiguity was his suspicion and dislike of the motives and methods of fashionable society—what was left of the "great world" in the old sense; and the base of his feeling may be seen in a letter to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Spring Rice, then, 12 February 1897, in Berlin, explaining his request that Spring Rice should not quote his remarks.

> The reaction of fashionable society against our old-fashioned liberalism is extreme, and wants only power to make it violent. I am waiting with curiosity to see whether the power will come—with the violence—in my time. As I view it, the collapse of our nineteenth century J. S. Mill, Manchester, Chicago formulas, will be displayed, if at all—by the collapse of Parliamentarianism, and the reversion to centralised government. The open abandonment of the system ought to be nearly simultaneous in Germany and France. It must coincide with social disintegration. The despot, the gold-bug and the anarchist are the real partners in the Trusts of our political future. To which class should one profess allegiance? I am in a tight place.

Adams' prophecy turned out right, though again he had figured the acceleration of the social process too high in Italy, Germany, Spain and France; yet in making it Adams made only a standard, recurring prophecy, made by Aristotle and Cicero, and which must be made again. The liberal state has never yet had the strength and plasticity to prevent its being overcome by the centralised, despotic state; and Adams had evidently had only little and intermittent hope that it would be able to hold back the clear set towards centralisation in the tide of his times. He did not himself know how much political centralisation was necessary to preserve the old liberal aspirations from usurpation by the new forces of industrial and financial centralisation; he did not know, and perhaps it was too soon, at the turn of the century, for the question to have been articulated, but the question was everywhere tacit in the questions he did raise, and was, so to speak, the immanent consideration in the sense of urgency with which he tried to shape the successive forms of an American foreign policy which should be as near a world policy as possible.

It was Russia that was both the incentive and the obstacle or probable limit to the effectiveness of such a policy. She was the incentive because she came more and more to represent a good half of the political power in the world and therefore forced the fragments of the other half into each others' arms. She was thus the object of conciliation and adjustment, the source of the chief conflict that must be put into concert. On the other hand she was the obstacle to the success of a liberal policy because she seemed either unwilling or unable to compete industrially or commer-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cially with the liberal world and clearly much preferred the primary use of that arbitrary force which was the liberal state's last recourse. By living back to the wall as a matter of choice, she drove the rest of the world closer and closer to the wall against its will. Her probable future alternatives seemed only one or another form of despotism, with any of which—whether imperial or socialistic—the rest of the world would have either to compete or unite. To compete, the rest of the world would have to reform in the light of its deepest principles; to unite, it would have to give up those principles altogether. Adams was a mugwump abroad as at home; that is, a reformer who tried to keep his eyes open.

In 1895, he saw Russia as the great new expanding element which could "sweep us out of her path without a squeal." In the same year he saw Germany as the tool of the Tsar in the struggle for the near east. In 1897, he saw Russia driving England into the arms of America, and asked whether Russia meant to rule Europe by European or Oriental processes. He thought there was an economic parallel between Russia in 1897 and America in 1865 and wondered whether the advent of state socialism would alter the equation. Thinking of Russia and Germany, it seemed to him that while every move of Germany upset the equilibrium, Russia could expand without disturbance. A war between Russia and Germany in Europe, "which ended to the advantage of central Europe and the recession of Russia might determine a new outburst of centralising energy", which is indeed one way of describing the rise of the Nazi state. But on the whole, Russia was a great speculation or an investment a century ahead living in the meantime on her credit, but when the investment came in with a "millennium of a centralised, despotic socialism" there would be inevitable economic war between Russia and the Anglo-American world. By 1898, he conceived that there would be two final concentrations of social energy, one Russian on the Black Sea, the other in the Mississippi Valley. In the process of the American concentration he thought his bugbear the Senate would have to succumb. "Either Julius Caesar must come, or must fail to come, which means our failure to reach the next stage of life." But with or without the death of the Senate he thought America would reach her final concentration before Russia reached hers, though "someday, perhaps a century hence, Russia may swallow even her." Yet he wrote in 1899, as we have already noted above,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as if it might be possible for Russia and America to start a world movement of disarmament, if only political administration had sense enough to follow economic experience. And yet, too, he thought Western Europe might recover by consolidating as far as Russia and ultimately conquer her, which was certainly the German plan in 1940; just as he saw that Hay's Open Door of 1900 showed Russia isolated.That is, he sometimes scaled Russia down, but mostly he scaled her up as the "colossal dwarf" who brings us back to the Tamerlane process, in which England would be the American outpost in Europe. Since England could not stand alone, the United States and Russia would have to administer the estate. But on that prospect, as seen in April 1901, Russia seemed a preposterous infant quite unable to run the world. "In fact, it is pretty clear now that the world has got to be run by us, or not at all. If we can't do it,—and I think we can't,—it will have to go back to the devil whence it came."

Adams' republicanism, like that of so many Americans, varied between evangelism and withdrawal, between the sense of driving enterprise and sickening futility, between obsession and doubt. But sometimes he struck a balance between them, even on the subject of Russia, for he understood very well how to whittle down the excesses of his own sensibility, which is the essence of republicanism. Remarking on America's attitude as she faced the world, he saw the worst sign "as our own fatuous self-confidence," and as if to break down that fatuity he went to Russia with the Lodges in the summer of 1901. The visit clarified his previsions. Her passive character—her inertia—he thought, would in the end exhaust the active character—the intensity—of Western Europe and America. She was not advancing so fast as Europe; her scale was greater, but her energy less, but her passivity would eventually become an economy of force. With her mass, speed was a subordinate element. Three years later, in 1904, he was convinced that a Russian Revolution on the scale of the French Revolution was inevitable. The combination of the Japanese War and the abortive revolts at home, convinced Adams that Russia would either go to pieces or found a new system. "No way is now open except the total overthrow of the irresponsible Tsar, and the creation of a serious government. Fifty years is hardly enough for this, but we all ought to, actively, press it, both by advice and by political avowal. For my own part, I want a successful Russia, with a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

peaceful system, not a bomb. Otherwise, America will have to fight, after Japan is done."

The prophecy here is too exact to be anything but an accident, and Adams took immediately a more expedient tack in a letter from Paris, 8 September 1904, to John Hay, in which he pretended he was the Kaiser demanding the readjustment of the world. Here the argument seems to run that it was in the general European and American interest to save both Japan and Russia. Japan must be the first power in the east in order to keep down both Russia and Germany; but Russia must not be entirely put down in Europe, since a weak Russia would strengthen Germany too greatly. The upshot was, as Adams saw it, that with no European power certain enough of its interests to act, President Roosevelt seized the opportunity and made the peace of Portsmouth. To Adams, this was an American triumph over Europe. "Only forty years ago, Europe walked over us roughshod. We have never asked to interfere and never have had any thought of it. We've no more sense than they have, but we've more mass and a better position. So we suddenly turn our back on Europe, and say that Empire has moved over to the Pacific, and Europe is helpless."

Addressed to Mrs. Cameron 3 September 1905, these exhilarated sentences are the last touch in the portrait Adams made of Russia in his letters, and in doing so he emphasized the nature of what he took to be America's true interest in Russia, the conflict for empire in the Pacific and perhaps on the mainland of Asia. This interest he did not seem to have seen as a matter of right or choice, but as a matter of historical necessity that ought to be made a matter of right and choice. According to the historical theory of his brother Brooks, in which he concurred, the centres of human energy moved west along the most economical trade routes creating markets at the cheapest sources of supply. America in 1900 therefore faced the Pacific and sooner or later would have to cross it where she would meet the Russian movement coming in the opposite direction. Hitherto in history there had turned out to be room as well as need for the expansion of trading powers. In the future, with no less need (or the feeling of necessity) there was far less visible room. When the Russian and American movements met, both the room and the power would have either to be pooled, or divided, or conquered. Because he saw the movement as inevitable in the future, Adams wanted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

America to get there, if not first, at least at the same time and on the same basis as Russia, and he wanted to do so by economic rather than military means. To pool was his first choice, to divide his second; war he wished to avoid.

His first statement on this part of his American policy comes in a letter dated 2 November 1901 to John Hay. After running over a list of foreign problems, he goes on:

> But I wish we were out of the Philippines. That is a false start in a wrong direction, which I never wanted, and have always feared. It leads us into a *cul de sac* in the tropics, and leads us away from our true line due west. Of course we are making mistake on mistake there, and drifting straight at the heels of England. The North Pacific is my line, not the South; our own race, and not the niggers, my instruments. To get back onto our true lines will be hard. I should like to see the government declare its avowed Cuban policy for the Philippines, even at the cost of inconsistency. Anything to escape British ruts!

The next day he pursued the matter in a letter to his brother Brooks.

> All our interests are for political peace to enable us to wage economical war. Therefore I hold our Philippine excursion to be a false start in a wrong direction, and one that is more likely to blunt our energies, than to guide them. It is a mere repetition of the errors of Spain and England. I wish we could have avoided it, or could escape it, and return to concentrating our efforts on the North Pacific. The task there is supremely difficult and needs all our energies and intelligence. In the Philippines we are handicapped by Europe, and must follow her methods. It is our tail that her teeth are in, and we can't shake her off. The road leads to the support of England in the south of China. Our true road leads to the support of Russia in the north—in both cases meaning our foothold in Asia.

When he complained of Spanish and English errors and European methods, he meant the use of force as a primary instrument of policy. In the letter to Brooks just quoted, after the maxim that true policy is the road of least resistance, he goes on: "Every country held and administered by force is a danger, and therefore uneconomical. If it leads somewhere, the waste of energy may be necessary, but in itself it is waste. It is resources—coal, iron, copper, wheat—that force markets, and will force them over all the navies and artilleries of the world." McKinley's policy in Cuba was avowedly an experiment in Empire by pooling without force.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By 2 February 1902, Adams had carried his far-eastern policy one step further. On that date he wrote Mrs. Cameron: "The one and only great diplomatic battle-field for us is British Columbia and Manchuria. Hay is completely blocked on both. Chamberlain straddles British Columbia, and holds him off. Russia straddles Manchuria. Hay would have to break down both of them, and he is justly afraid even to whisper of it. Nevertheless both things must happen, if we are to run our house at all." Adams' only further reference to the Canadian part of his scheme was to Hay, 15 September 1903, when the Alaskan boundary and the route of the Panama Canal were both in dispute. "As everything is, at bottom, a matter of money, I suppose you can always buy your way out, but it will in the end come cheaper to buy Columbia outright, and rent Canada." Perhaps Adams saw that Canada was already part of our pooled Empire; at any rate he said no more about it, but he explicitly followed the Russo-Manchurian part of his policy as long as he continued to write about foreign affairs. For instance, he noted that the Anglo-Japanese treaty of 1902, which guaranteed Chinese integrity, was an invitation for Japan to attack Russia. A year later, 22 March 1903, he wrote the following extraordinarily prescient paragraph to Mrs. Cameron.

> My statesmanship is still all in China, where the last struggle for power is to come. China is bound to go to pieces, and every year is a long step to the bad. The only country now on the spot is Russia, and if Russia organizes China as an economical power, the little drama of history will end in the overthrow of our clumsy Western civilization. We never can compete with Asia, and Chinese coal and labor, organized by a Siberian system. In that event I allow till 1950 to run our race out. It does not interest me enough to hang on for it another half century.

We need cite no more on Russia as the focal obstacle of American policy in the far east; she was also the principal obstacle either naked or masked by Germany, in Adams' European policy, and it was as a means of dealing with Russian and German force that he built up his notion of a community of Atlantic powers, or Atlantic combine, which if wholly successful would attract Russia into membership, or, failing that, would be able successfully to combat her. Adams said that he got his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

notion from McKinley's foreign policy and Hay's diplomacy under that policy; but neither McKinley nor Hay seem ever to have given critical expression to the notion. Whether or not it was an adequate American policy for 1900, it has been for every year since then at least an apt American policy. It has fitted every crisis and nearly every circumstance of American experience since; and after 1939 it began to be recreated by English and American hands—not to mention Belgian, Dutch, and Scandinavian hands—for contemporary use. That Adams could have created such a policy, so far still living, is his chief claim to success in the habit of looking ahead.

So far as the published letters are adequate evidence, Adams' notion seems to have been a hare he started in thinking about the Dreyfus case, in which he insisted on seeing the moral collapse of France out of which the socialists could alone profit. A socialist France would be an appendage of central Europe, that is of Germany, Austria, and perhaps Russia. She would look east rather than west. As he put it to Hay, 20 August 1899, "With central Europe . . . we must by the nature of things be at war. France is our oldest ally, and if her weight is to be thrown decidedly into the opposite scale, your successor some day will need help." Some time between that date and October 1900, with the Boer War and the Boxer Rebellion as points on the course, he made the following further development, again to Hay: "My diplomatic hobby has been, as you know, to detach France from Eastern Europe, and bring her into an Atlantic system, where she has certainly at least an equal interest to be; but there is here [Paris] a regular conspiracy which seems to have its roots in the *haute banque*, to excite and keep up an acute hostility to England in order to divert France from her revenge on Germany." An *entente cordial* with Germany seemed likely. "At one time I thought that Russia was doing it. Now I am inclined to think it is Berlin, and that the Jew bankers are helping the Kaiser to bring it about." When three months later the Panama Canal Treaty with England came up in the Senate, Adams wrote Hay at great length to the effect that neutralisation of the Canal (which was what the Senate rejected) was a mere *modus vivendi*. "Our cards ought to be played against Germany, to prevent her from taking the hegemony of Western Europe. . . . The trouble is that England is not enough for us. We need

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

France too. Suppose you neutralize your canal! What is to prevent Germany from completing Panama!" By Panama, Adams meant a rival canal to that then in discussion. He went on: "That is, instead of playing the cards, we let Germany play them. . . . This done, we stand face to face with the ultimate issue which our people can then clearly understand. They must then accept a *modus vivendi.* They may, of course, fight if they like, but to fight is to own the loss of the game. In our day, a fight is stupid, as the English know. We cannot win by fighting, unless we can win equally by economical weight and skill without fighting." He then argued that the treaty, accepted, would settle nothing, but if rejected would bring the Monroe Doctrine to final issue. "In other words, you want to pool; the Senate wants to divide and compete; the result of the first would be to postpone; that of the last, to precipitate. God only knows which would turn out best for us."

Those interested in the rights and wrongs of Adams' views on the Canal policy should read the whole of these letters in relation to a full account of the diplomacy involved, such as that in Bemis' *Diplomatic History of the United States.* The sentences quoted here are meant only to illustrate, in the minimum context, the development of his general notion of foreign policy; and the notable phrases are "an Atlantic system", the phrase about not fighting unless victory was possible by economical means without fighting, and the phrase about pooling rather than division and competition. All these notions were a development of Adams' understanding of the Monroe Doctrine, and all followed the lines he took in his pre-Spanish War Cuban policy.

The idea of an Atlantic system constructed by pooling rather than by fighting was exactly his central notion. Only the phrase about fighting had to be modified in the light of the foreseeable struggles in which the other side, being unable to compete by economical means, would insist on fighting. The rest remained and seemed to grow stronger for having admitted the possibility of the use of force. After his trip to Russia with the Lodges in 1901, he proceeded to the Scandinavian countries by himself, where the contrast with Russia led him to write Mrs. Cameron from Norway: "Sweden and Norway and Great Britain belong to our system; not to eastern Europe. The Baltic separates, while the Atlantic only unites. Why it is so I cannot conceive, but I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

begin to see that it was always so, and that somebody, at the beginning, cut Europe in halves, once for all, along the Vistula. I have ridden along this dividing line for a month, and here at last I feel that I've got to the end. Our respected ancestors came from hereabouts like the glacial ice-cap, and they were never anywhere else. They growed here." When he got back to Paris, he was again anxious about detaching France from Central Europe, and wrote to Hay, 28 November 1901: "We ought to shape a permanent policy to counteract it. If England is going to try to set up a third system, hostile both to central Europe and to us, we can dispute no European market except that of France." Nearly four years later, 27 August 1905, again to Mrs. Cameron: "We have got to support France against Germany, and fortify an Atlantic system beyond attack; for if Germany breaks down England or France, she becomes the centre of a military world, and we are lost. The course of concentration must be decided by force,—whether military or industrial matters not much to the end, but to us it is the whole game, for we are industrial." Twelve years later, 8 June 1917, after the United States had been two months in the First World War, Adams wrote his old English friend, Gaskell: "Meanwhile, here we are, for the first time in our lives fighting side by side and to my bewilderment I find the great object of my life thus accomplished in the building up of the great community of Atlantic Powers which I hope will at least make a precedent that can never be forgotten. We have done it once and perhaps we can keep it up." He then reflected that it was not common Anglo-American intention which brought the community about, but German military force.

That this was so only adds to Adams' prevision of the necessity of his policy, with the possibility that had it been adopted earlier the war could have been limited, if not avoided. To limit ultimate military conflicts when they were not avoidable was the final purpose of Adams' policy; and if we turn now to the *Education* we can see Adams' fullest expression of the problem and the purpose. What is added there is nothing new in thought, but the force supplied to thought by style and consideration. There he wrote again and at one time what had been written casually in the letters over a period of ten years. Let us compare first the passage about the Atlantic system and Scandinavia in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the letters with what happened to it in the *Education,* where it reads as follows:

> From Hammerfest to Cherbourg on one shore of the ocean—from Halifax to Norfolk on the other—one great empire was ruled by one great emperor—Coal. Political and human jealousies might tear it apart or divide it, but the power and the empire were one. Unity had gained that ground. Beyond lay Russia, and there an older, perhaps a surer power, resting on the eternal law of inertia, held its own.

Between Russia and this "natural" western system, stood the countries of central Europe, drawn first one way and then the other, hovering between a coal-power or industrial system and a gun-power or military system; but they stood between not as a gap or barrier but as friction leading to conflict. If Germany could be brought into an Atlantic system "and held there, a century of friction would be saved. No price would be too great for such an object; although no price could probably be wrung out of Congress as equivalent for it." After Germany came Russia. "The last and highest triumph of history would . . . be the bringing of Russia into the Atlantic combine, and the just and fair allotment of the whole world among the regulated activities of the universe." A truly Augustan policy!

But unlike the imperial policy of the first century, Adams' policy was not held as exclusive, and its own failure was envisaged as part of its conception. If Adams felt that, assuming Russia as a partner, he could "finish—provisionally—his chart of international unity," he also felt the risk in his assumption. Suppose Russia preferred to trust to her own fate; suppose, that is, she found herself trying for universal empire on her own, just as a matter of growth and absorption. In that case, "the fatalism of Russian inertia means the failure of American intensity." It was in the cards, as Adams read them in 1903, that "the vast force of inertia known as China was to be united with the huge bulk of Russia in a single mass which no amount of new force could henceforward deflect. . . . The wall of Russian inertia that barred Europe across the Baltic, would bar America across the Pacific." Thus we repeat the sentences with which this study of Adams' foreign policy began. "What and where was the *vis nova* that could hold its own before this prodigious ice-cap of *vis inertiae?*"

The answer to that question could not be found in the study

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of foreign policy, though the problems of foreign policy could not be permanently solved without such an answer. The answer needed a philosophy of religion and history—of those forces in relation to which man felt himself either helpless or a superman. Adams, in the last sentences he wrote on foreign policy in the *Education,* left the question tacit but pressing. It is of his friend John Hay that he writes; and it is characteristic of him that he should credit Hay with the enactment of ideas which were actually interpretations of the optimum possibilities in the facts of Hay's performance.

> He had brought the great Atlantic powers into a working system, and even Russia seemed about to be dragged into a combine of intelligent equilibrium based on an intelligent allotment of activities. For the first time in fifteen hundred years a true Roman *pax* was in sight, and would, if it succeeded, owe its virtues to him. Except for making peace in Manchuria, he could do no more; and if the worst should happen, setting continent against continent in arms—the only apparent alternative to his scheme—he need not repine at missing the catastrophe.

This was as far as Adams could see in 1905; and it is because what he saw then remains still the necessity of 1955—faced with the same apparent alternative—that the story of what he saw is worth study. In Western Europe the struggle still goes on to unite politically the Atlantic system which is already united in fact in its common dependence on what Adams meant by coal-power, and the further struggle, either to unite with Russia or to develop the means of coping with her refusal to unite on Western terms, still presents the ultimate political problem of Europe and of America as she looks towards Europe. The risk of gun-power or piracy is still the force that prevents the solution of that problem and persuades power after power to align itself in such a way as to prevent any effective unity in the system. So also in the Pacific the struggle for northern China and what used to be called Manchuria comes nearer its climax, with America and Russia more clearly than ever the chief contenders. The great point of difference between Adams' expectations and what has happened lies in the fact that Russia has gained far more—and more rapidly—in intensity than Adams thought likely. It is therefore necessary—and there lies the great hope in the changed conditions—to cease treating Russia like an icecap of fatal inertia and to treat her, and ourselves, as if

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she had become an intelligent power, no more and no less fatally moved than the other powers that make up the world. The same effort that Adams made with regard to Cuba—the effort to apply the Monroe Doctrine as mutually held by all American powers; the same effort that he tried to help Hay make in China at the turn of the century—the effort to make the great powers act mutually with China; the same effort that he envisaged, and pretended Hay had accomplished, in combining the mutual interests of an Atlantic system; exactly that effort now becomes necessary, and therefore all the more possible, in combining the intelligent interests of Russia with the intelligent interests of the rest of the world in an order capable of mutual allegiance. What is common in fact—conflicting interests—must be made mutual in policy.

The light into which Adams brings the necessity of a world policy is not the light of statesmanship but the light of criticism. He was not a statesman but the stable-companion of statesmen. He did not run foreign affairs, but foreign affairs sometimes seemed to him to be run in his house. He was not the centre of movement, but he was at the centre where movement could be felt, its direction guessed, and its ends judged. He could see means becoming, for lack of responsive guessing, ends, and ends becoming merely immediate means, for lack of judgment; and these were the conditions he criticised. It is the example of his criticism which ought to be preserved; for the criticism of history, unlike the history criticised, is good on future occasions in that its process can be repeated and its standards retained for exactly the same reasons that it was good in the first place. It corrected the present by looking to the future, and by feeling the shift of the forces of the past. To look to the future is to make an ideal out of all the past that is still alive. Criticism, of the kind Adams practiced in the creation of his policy, is man's means of finding the incentive of trying again; for without that kind of criticism, statesmen would either not know what they were trying to do, or would not know when they fell short or overreached it, just as the rest of us, without that criticism, could not look critically at our own ideal. If by chance we should find ourselves supporting a version of Adams' policy it must be because we have found our image of the future by the aid of his criticism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LOUIS SIMPSON

Good News of Death

A PASTORAL

The Persons:

CHLOE, *a shepherdess, wife of* PETER
CUDDY, *a businessman*
PETER, *a shepherd*
ROLAND (*also called* ORESTES), *a sheep*
First Fury
Second Fury
Third Fury
A shepherd

The place is mountainous, the weather turning cold; in the last scene night falls and a star is rising.

SCENE ONE

PETER *and* CHLOE *are seated on the grass, eating.* ROLAND *crops in the background. Enter* CUDDY, *running.*

CHLOE. Stop and tell us, Mister Cuddy, where at such a pace you're going.

CUDDY. I never stop for nobody unless there's money owing.

CHL. Won't you tell us, Mister Cuddy, what it is that's on your mind. . . .
Is it too much work and study, or is Phyllis still unkind?

CUD. Good day, shepherds, live at leisure, but we other businessmen
In hard work must take our pleasure, in our cow and pig and hen.

PETER. Is Amaryllis on your mind, that makes you run so fast.

CUD. No, Amaryllis is unkind, I have no time to waste.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PET. There must be cause for such a haste. Say, is your Holstein lost?
Or news of war with Russia? Cuddy, have you seen a ghost?

CUD. The marketplace is waiting. Give me room to stretch my legs.
While I stand here hesitating, up goes butter, down go eggs.

CHL. Won't you stop if Chloe asks it, just a while to rest your knees?
See here, Cuddy, in my basket I have wine and sausages.

CUD. I do not trust a lady that is naked as she is.
I may be late already. I must run. Excuse me please.

[*Exit* CUDDY, *running*]

SCENE TWO

CHL. As I was saying, you can't even keep
Your wife in clothes, yet here's another sheep.
You always buy what other people sell.
My mother used to warn me . . .

PET. Stop that bell!

CHL. I'll ring it as I please. Does all this prove
Your promises, your pledge of "richer love"?
Now you take Phoebe, who just married Ted . . .

PET. Who hasn't taken her?

CHL. What's that you said?
Her husband doesn't dress her in a leaf.
If you were more like Colin . . .

PET. And a thief.

CHL. I think the time is not too far away
That I'll sprout horns, bear wool, and answer *Baa!*
Oh, why did I become a shepherd's wife!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PET. The fairest woman chose to share that life,
And for the passion of a shepherd boy
The very gods fought on the plains of Troy.

Between Scamander and the sky-blue sea
A city stood, that held the golden key
To Hellespont. Close by, on Ida's steep
King Priam's son, young Paris, kept his sheep.
To him, one sunny afternoon, there came
Three naked goddesses who knew his name.
When he'd come to his senses, they said this:
At the nuptials of Pelius and Thetis
The gossip goddess, Eris, was excluded.
She, spiteful as a woman, sulked and brooded,
And hit on this revenge, to throw an apple
Among them, marked "For the most beautiful."
Three goddesses had claimed it: here they were,
Juno, Aphrodite, Athena.
And now they asked, it was a small request,
Which did he think in honesty the fairest?
They offered presents. Paris would not budge
(More happy to deliberate than judge).
But Aphrodite, reading in his mind,
Or seeing him already so inclined,
Offered the fairest woman for his own.
She had the apple, and the harm was done.

Now Sparta's king, unlucky Menelaus,
Had brought a young wife, Helen, to his house,
As you or I might put a burning torch
To bed and chamber, parlor, roof and porch.
Above her patient distaff, the young bride
Would often dream, and as she dreamed she sighed.
Then Paris came. She looked and looked again
And saw the meaning of her dreams made plain.
Without much conversation, they soon crept
Into each other's arms, while statues wept.

At last they ran away, nor heard behind
Trumpets, and towers falling in the wind.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The sail was spread, the sun on the blue sea
Clasped in a net their white intricacy.
He was the spear and she the flopping fish,
He had his Helen, and she had her wish.

How Menelaus' brother, Agamemnon,
Besieged tall Troy until the war was won;
Of Iphigenia and the calm at Aulis,
And of the famous wrath of Achilles;
How Clytemnestra, Agamemnon's wife,
Murdered her husband with an altar knife,
And with Orestes ended Pelop's curse,
Are told in epic and dramatic verse.

CHL. So Helen was a kind of shepherdess!
This is a long way from a ragged dress.
Let Phoebe keep her silly goosedown bed!
Just wait until I tell her what you've said!

[ROLAND, *the sheep, comes to the front and, with strange expressions, he speaks*]

ROLAND. The secret's out. Your story breaks the spell.
My name is not Roland. My name is . . . well,
Call me Orestes.

PET. No, impossible!

ROL. When Agamemnon, with his brave allies
Pursuing Paris, was becalmed at Aulis,
Old Calchas, the soothsayer, then advised
The King's own daughter must be sacrificed.
Proud Agamemnon gave her to be killed.
Iphigenia, how the sails were filled!

Ten years they fought at Troy, a cold exile.
But Clytemnestra, the King's wife, meanwhile
Thought of a daughter, by a husband dead,
And first harmed Agamemnon in his bed.
Aegisthus was her lover, soft and sly,
With whom she turned the palace to a sty.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The torches leap, the conqueror returns,
They kill the ox, pour out the holy urns.
He climbs the purple carpet to his wife,
Who smiling whets the sacrificial knife.
They lift the battered helmet, the bronze plates
That Hector dented, and his tub awaits.

What shout was that? Once more, and yet again!
In his unholy pride my father's slain.

Now Clytemnestra with defiant mien
Rules with Aegisthus, a tyrannic queen;
But Fate, incessant Fate, is at the door
And shakes the roof and undermines the floor.
Electra, my own sister, sullen wench,
Is married to a swineherd, in his stench
To lose her memories. But there's a son,
Orestes, and his whereabouts unknown.

And so I come to Argos, well disguised,
I meet Electra and am recognised.
The stage is set. Aegisthus dies the first,
His pampered fingers clasp the dagger's thrust.
My mother's next. But Nature shudders Stop!
My trembling hands would let the dagger drop,
But the quick god, Apollo (whose strange ways
I have not understood these many days)
Urges revenge. Now Clytemnestra falls
And Matricide goes shrieking through the halls.

A crowd approaches, and with sticks and stones
Would end the curse of Pelop's house at once.
Apollo intervenes. They see, perplexed,
A god against the law.

The Furies, vexed,
From Hades in their endless coils arise,
I see them at the corners of my eyes,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I run into the dark. . . . And from this day
I run, I run, and can no longer stay
Than sleep, but that's another kind of pain,
And when I sleep I cry to wake again.

But since I've had some practise at disguise,
Sometimes I manage to elude the Furies:
At Delphi for a while as a shoemaker,
In Athens as a critic and a baker.
The god, Apollo, would protect me still,
But he became more unpredictable
Until he vanished out of sight and mind.
Apollo went, and left me here behind.
The Furies followed still; *they* had not changed.
Through more disguises I more madly ranged.
The noble masks the gods once lent to man
Were gone. The age of animals began.
This wool, these horns, are all that stand between
Myself and sights too horrid to be seen.
The poor disguise conceals, until I hear
My name. Then truth compels me to declare
I am Orestes.

[*Enter the Furies*]

1ST FURY. Where is he, sister?

2ND FURY. Never too far away.

3RD FURY. I hear him, I smell him, Orestes,
Clytemnestra's bloody boy.

1ST F. Our darling, to the verge of death.

2ND F. Apollo is dead, he cannot help him now.

3RD F. Oho, a pretty ram!

CHL. Peter, I think that I am going to faint.

ROL. Ah, my god, my god,
I see them, they exist, out of my mind or in it.
I am not mad, though there were times I've wished
I might be so. I've gone
Beyond such selfish terror. Come, dull Death,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And may the kind and courteous world
Hear no more of me. Oh, Apollo!

1ST F. Apollo is dead, they've buried Apollo,
And soon you will wish that you might follow.

CHL. Oh, Peter, help me away, I can't stand more.

PET. This is more mutton than I bargained for.

SCENE THREE

ROLAND *is lying in the foreground. Enter* PETER, *cautiously, and a shepherd. They are armed with sticks.*

PET. I tell you that I saw them. There were three . . .

SHEPHERD. I've seen that kind myself, especially
When I have had a drink, or even two.

PET. This is no joke. And Chloe saw them too.

SHEP. Why, here he is, your consecrated sheep . . .
Roland!

PET. Orestes!

SHEP. This is a strange sleep.

PET. No, feel his pulse. He's dead. He'll never more
Nibble the salty sedges at the shore,
Nor juicy hill grass. He has filled his crop,
No more will chew, and ruminate, and drop.
Bleat, bleat, you lambs, it will be of no use,
And bawl for Roland now, you widowed ewes,
For all your bellies, swollen not with wind,
Must yield more orphans to call Fate unkind.

Well, all is over. Nothing's left to do
But bear him to some archipelago
That's high above the storms. There he will have
A simple shaft to mark his tragic grave.
[*Exeunt in a dead march, bearing* ROLAND]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SCENE FOUR

PETER, CHLOE, *the Shepherd*. *Enter* CUDDY, *running*.

CHL. Won't you stop and tell us, Cuddy, where at such a pace you're going.

PET. He never stops for nobody unless there's money owing.

CUD. I am following the rumor that is out and running wild.
They say that Christ has come about like any other child.
The murderer, the usurer, the robber and all such,
Except the men of Caesar, are forgiven by his touch.
The hanged man, the stabbed man, the man who's crucified,
The man who drank and drabbed too much and sickened till he died,
Will sit again, will stand again, will run again and leap,
And of their death feel no more pain than we do when we sleep.

PET. Will you stop your silly joking. We've been to a funeral.

SHEP. To joke at death is shocking.

CUD. But it's true, God bless you all!
A man just came from Bethlehem, knocking at every house,
And woke up all Jerusalem, the chickens and the cows.
They say in her conceiving that his mother stayed intact.

CHL. That's not for my believing.

CUD. But, sweet lady, it's a fact.
Her husband, Joseph, swears it, and most surely he should know.

PET. He has the horn and wears it, but he doesn't have to blow.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SHEP. Peter, catch him by the forelock so that I may feel his pulse.
This is dementia precox.

CUD. If you do, I'll crack your skulls.
I will not take your medicine, I will not take your dose,
And here's a kick upon the shin, a bang upon your nose.

[*Exit* CUDDY, *running, and enter* ROLAND *with the graveclothes still around him*]

SHEP. God help us all, what is this now!

PET. Orestes, up again!

SHEP. If I escape I make this vow, to leave off drink and women.

[ROLAND *to the front*]

ROL. I dreamed I died and rose through chilly space,
And suddenly I felt the marrow lost
Of pity, toleration, interest.
The stony sun would never shed a tear,
The moon like a mad girl went screaming by,
I saw my funeral far, far below,
And you as animals of a gray kind.
The wolves would run a long way with your bones.

Then, as the worms began their butchery,
And as I hovered on a burning brink,
I fell and trailed
These linens down a comfortable sky,
And was contained in hands, attended by
An angel in a starry ambulance,
My wool washed white,
Straightway upon eternity I rushed.

Then, then it was I heard the mourners cry
The Sacrificial Lamb. This was not I,
But someone else, it seemed. And soon I knew,
For travelers arrived, a company,
And one called Jesus, with bliss flickering

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From deep wounds that he wore. I heard them sing,
And I too sang in tones of purest joy,
For it was He, my master, bright Apollo,
Though changed miraculously, gentler now.
He turned toward me, and the singing stopped . . .

I cannot quite remember what He said,
But something that pertained to animals,
That he on whom the splendid vision falls
Will live again. The wool pulled from my eyes,
This death, I knew, was one more glad disguise,
And when my heart had almost burst for joy,
As from a dream woke smiling, still with tears.
So I returned from death, but cannot remember
The rest of the journey.

[*Enter the Furies*]

1ST F. Woe, woe, woe,
We have been betrayed,
Our kingdom is laid low
Even among the dead.
The law is not above
Nor is the law below.
I tear my garments so,
Put ashes on my head.

2ND F. Woe, woe, woe,
We have been betrayed,
But yet, before we go,
Tremble and be afraid.
These newer laws of love
Will shatter at a blow
The order that's above,
The order that's below.

3RD F. Woe, woe, woe,
We have been betrayed,
But centuries will show
The right of what we did.
The turning wheel will move
This Jesus out also,
And the event will prove
That truth is always so.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SCENE FIVE

PETER, ROLAND, CHLOE, CUDDY.

PET. I wish I could persuade you still to stay.

ROL. We'll meet again, dear Peter, some fine day.
But now that star will lead me to the child,
And I must seek him out. Be reconciled.
I've come a long way, there's a long way to go
Over the mountains, in the cold snow.

PET. Wait till tomorrow. Surely Christ will keep.
He wouldn't grudge an animal his sleep.
Wait till the summer, when the sun has flecked
The olives. There's no hurry to a sect.
You've come a long way, there's a long way to go
Over the mountains, in the cold snow.

CHL. Yes, wait till summer, when the greening vines
Dance down the gentle valley in their lines,
When the glad shepherd pipes upon the hay
And the ewes bleat, and the young lambkins play.
You may change your mind. Wait till you know.
Think of the mountains and the cold snow.

PET. See how the night, a smoky column, turns
In the cold wind, and the hard frost burns
The silent hills . . .

ROL. No more, for I must do
One timeless thing. Good friends, goodbye to you.
My mind is made up, and now I must go
Over the mountains in the cold snow.

But, in my turn, may I invite you all . . .

PET. No thank you, Roland, my poor lambs would bawl,
And I don't trust this child of whom you speak,
The way is roundabout, the prospect bleak,
This may be just a fashion, more or less.
I do not think that I will go, I guess,
I am afraid he may turn out a snob
Who never has a wife or holds a job.
No, I'll be total in each enterprise,
And after, make my vices meet my eyes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

[*Enter* CUDDY, *running*]

CUD. I have given up my business and left my family,
For where the star has risen is the place where I would be.
I will cross the Jordan river in a carillon of bells,
Though it's cold I will not shiver, He will take away my spells.
He will take your sins away at once, so be no more perplexed,
He's the pause between what happens and the thing that happens next.

ROL. Now let the bottoms of the precipices
Reecho these immortal promises,
And let the mountains tell through all their ranges
That death itself is changed, that all things changes.
And now we are off, there's a long way to go
Over the mountains, in the cold snow.

[*Exeunt* ROLAND *and* CUDDY]

CHL. Goodbye, dear Roland, and good luck to you.

PET. This is good news of death, if it is true.

THE END

PETER'S emblem: *Absit invidia.*

ROLAND'S emblem: *Non omnis moriar.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ROBERT GRAVES

Jungian Mythology

NEVER ARGUE HISTORICALLY ABOUT GREEK MYTHS with Freudians or Jungians. Members of neither persuasion can react in more than a single way to the subject.

Never, for instance, try to convince a Freudian practitioner that, in the original story on which Freud's theory of the Oedipus Complex is based, Oedipus neither killed his father nor lay with his mother—since Laius was, in fact, Oedipus's royal predecessor, not his progenitor, and Jocasta was the Theban representative of the pre-Hellenic Mother-goddess, not his progenitrix. He is preconditioned to reply: "But we can prove by innumerable case-histories that all boys are in love with their mothers and have a repressed desire to kill their fathers, which the myth unconsciously betrays."

And never show him a Greek vase painting of blinded Oedipus leaning on a stick, unless you are prepared to hear him argue in a circle:

"Blinded Oedipus leans on a stick;
A stick is a phallic symbol;
Therefore blindness symbolizes castration.

Moreover:

A stick is a phallic symbol;
Blindness symbolizes castration;
Therefore blinded Oedipus leans on a stick.

Also:

Blindness symbolizes castration;
Blinded Oedipus leans on a stick;
Therefore a stick is a phallic symbol—

And *that* is why four-year-old boys love playing with sticks and show (unconsciously) a morbid fear of castration—as we can prove by innumerable case-histories."

The Freudian syllogism is watertight and humourless, and one practitioner closely resembles all others because, in order to qualify as such, he must first submit to psycho-analysis and approve of all its weird findings. This *credo quia absurdum* acceptance of the theory by thousands of qualified physicians is a remarkable feature of our age; but Freud was a pioneer in the field of practical

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

psycho-therapy and organized Freudianism has now become a vested interest, reputably authoritative, and state-fostered throughout the Western World; so that even those practitioners who do not wholeheartedly believe in it accept its pragmatic value at least. Freudian infiltration into literary criticism has been disastrous, if only because the theory is logically unassailable, granted its unprovable premiss. Writers who have betrayed their professed literary standards, throw a nervous breakdown, consult an analyst, win back confidence in themselves as geniuses, and set out again with a splendid new vocabulary of jargon.

It is not generally recognized that Freud, in his work on the symbolism of dreams, split personality and related subjects, stood in much the same relationship to Gottlieb Schubert—my maternal great-grandfather—on whose revolutionary writings his early work is squarely based,[1] as Charles Darwin did to the Abbé Lamarck. Each refurbished a predecessor's concept and gave it a new controversial quirk—Freud, "the Infantile Libido"; Darwin, "Natural Selection"—and was so energetic in promoting it and founding a personal School that both "Darwinism" and "Freudianism" are now popular synonyms for the general theories of evolution and the mechanism of dreams.

Jungians have been less successful, since ours is an age of sick souls at odds with their environment and Jung has always shown greater interest in group-psychology than in individual cases. He regards myths as an irrepressible uprush of fancy from the primitive group-mind in which the symbols constantly shift and change, like faces in a dream. Jung's work is also ultimately based on Schubert's, but more particularly on his romantic speculations about the collective unconscious, through the line of Carus, Fechner, James and Wundt. He, too, has organized a humourless and watertight psychological system on which he takes a firm stand; though recently there have been rumours that he is amending important parts of it in secret lectures to select pupils, who are forbidden to take notes.

Essays on a Science of Mythology[2] contains alternate pieces by C. Kerényi, a pious Hungarian disciple of Jung's, and Jung him-

[1] *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft*, Dresden, 1816; *Die Geschichte der Seele*, Stuttgart, 1830; *Die Symbolik des Traumes*, Leipzig, 1837. See *Interpretation of Dreams: Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, Modern Library, p. 370.

[2] Translated by R. F. C. Hull. Bollingen Series. The title to the English edition is *An Introduction to a Science of Mythology*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

self. But this title is disclaimed in the text: we find both authors denouncing the folly of any attempt at a rational approach to mythology. Kerényi, though he has long been publishing psychological treatises with titles like *Apollo, Hermes* and *Mnemosyne,* is more at home in Hungarian and Finnish folk-tales than in Classical mythology—a very different subject—to which he tries to relate them. In the book under review he has prepared the material for Jung's comment, after predigesting it on Jungian principles—though in a recent letter to the London *Times Literary Supplement* he surprisingly asserts: "the ideas and discoveries of Professor Jung played no role in my life in 1939, when I wrote these essays."[3]

Myths are neither irresponsible nor fanciful: they may be defined as the equivalent, in story form, of a pictorial shorthand anciently used for religious or political ends. A true science of mythology would begin with the deciphering of symbols used in this shorthand at different periods of history or pre-history.

Pictorial shorthand is not, however, a necessarily primitive technique; it is still widely used, especally in the newspaper cartoon. Some years ago, in the introduction to my *Golden Fleece,* I wrote that Vachel Lindsay's poem *Bryan, Bryan, Bryan* deserves the attention of all students of Greek mythology. Remembering his adolescent emotions during William Jennings Bryan's campaign for the U. S. Presidency in 1896, Lindsay mixes autobiographical statement with pictographic language borrowed from Democratic cartoonists:

> *In a coat like a deacon*
> *In a black Stetson hat*
> *He scourged the Elephant plutocrats*
> *With barbed wire from the Platte . . .*
> *. . . plutocrats . . .*
> *With dollar signs upon their coats*
> *And spats on their feet.*

This is a simple myth for even an Englishman to decipher. It is clear that McKinley, Hanna and the Republican party-leaders were scourged no more than verbally by Bryan; that the Elephant is the Republican party emblem; and that the barbed wire stands

[3]Yet on p. 81 (English edition) occurs the sentence: "We can call psychological research—above all Jung's—to witness in this respect, since it has demonstrated exactly, step by step, the existence of 'archaic' elements in the psychic life of modern man."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for the voting interests of the cattle-raising South and West—the Platte lying in Bryan's Nebraska. It is clear, too, that few Wall Street plutocrats wore spats (which symbolized their affectation of English manners) and that the dollar signs were imaginatively put on their coats as a taunt that money lay too close to their hearts.

Greek mythographers, I pointed out, used this sort of language, and if Lindsay had been a sixth-century Greek, the poem would have been summarized in the mythographies of Hyginus and Apollodorus more or less as follows:

> Lindsaeos of Ochian Parthenie, the dithyrambist, recounts a fabulous fight between Bryaneus, a black-garbed champion of the neat-herds who haunt the well-watered Plattos, some say a helmeted priest of the demi-god Stetos, Zeus's son, and certain rich tyrants of the East who came against him with elephants. He, using only a scourge of iron strands, drove out from the borders of the western land these baleful tyrants, clad in half-spatterdashes such as mountain folk use, and in white tunics embroidered with the device of a serpent twined about twin stakes; for by this sign they dedicated themselves to the Infernal Serpent Plutos, Giver of Wealth. Nevertheless, in the end, Bryaneus was worsted in battle and confined to Tartarus.

Cartoon shorthand is often extremely terse, as in the device for the recent Festival of Britain: Britannia's helmeted head at the North point of a red, white and blue compass, with a line of flags stretched between the East and West. But the visitor asks for no psychological explanation: he knows that Britannia symbolizes British achievement and that the north is the point by which all compasses are set. The flags are festival flags, but suggest also that members of every nation in the world are magnetically drawn to British shores.

However, the original meaning of pictorial symbols is easily forgotten and misunderstood. In four thousand years, what will archaeologists make of the Festival device? Or of the mysterious sporting cartoon which any British sportsman will understand at sight: a lion shouldering a wooden bat courteously presents a small urn, containing cricket-ashes, to a kangaroo? Will they describe them as "bizarre and chimerical fancies of the Late Christian Age"?

Chimerical is an adjective formed from the noun *chimaera.* Four thousand years ago the Chimaera was not at all bizarre, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nobody regarded her as an uprush from the collective unconscious. She was a formal composite beast with (as Homer records) a lion's head, a goat's body and a serpent's tail. The chimaera has been found carved on a Hittite temple at Carchemish, and was originally a calendar symbol: each of her parts represented one of the three seasons of the Carian sacred year.

Bellerophon, in the Homeric myth, masters the winged horse Pegasus and kills the fire-breathing Chimaera. Perseus, in a variant of the same myth, flies through the air and beheads Pegasus's mother, the Gorgon Medusa. His name was first spelt *Pterseus*, "the Destroyer"; and he was not, as Kerényi suggests, an archetypal Death figure, but represented the patriarchal Hellenes who invaded Greece and Asia Minor early in the second millennium B.C., and whose male trinity of gods, Indra, Mitra and Varuna, ousted the Triple Moon-goddess, the supreme divine matriarch of Europe and Asia Minor before male gods were known there. Pegasus was a symbol of the pre-Hellenic religion which used the horse—sacred to the Moon (because of its moon-shaped hoof-prints)—as a cult-animal for rain-making ceremonies. Medusa was the Goddess herself, behind a prophylactic Gorgon-mask, a hideous face intended to warn the profane against trespass. Perseus beheaded Medusa: that is, the Hellenes overran the Goddess's chief shrines, stripped the Gorgon-masks from her priestesses and took possession of the sacred horses. In an early record of this event, found in Boeotia, the Goddess is pictured with a Gorgon's head and a mare's body. Bellerophon, Perseus's double, killed the Chimaera: that is, the Hellenes annulled the ancient Medusan calendar, and replaced it by another.

A large part of Greek myth is politico-religious history of this sort. Heracles's slaying of the Lernaean Hydra and the Nemean lion, his capture of the Ceryneian stag, his robbing of the tripod from the priestess of Delphi: all these record the seizure by the Hellenes of local matriarchal shrines. So does Apollo's attempted rape of Daphne who was metamorphosed into a laurel; yet this myth is quoted by Freudian psychologists as symbolizing a girl's instinctive horror of the sexual act. Daphne was no frightened virgin. Her name is a contraction of *Daphoine*, "the Bloody One", the Goddess in orgiastic mood, whose priestesses, the Maenads, chewed laurel-leaves[4] as an intoxicant and, periodically,

[4]Containing cyanide of potassium.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rushed out when the moon was full to assault unwary travellers, and tear children or young animals in pieces. The Hellenes suppressed these Maenad colleges and the laurel-grove remained sole witness to Daphoine's former occupancy of the shrines; but the chewing of laurel by anyone except the prophetic Pythian priestess, whom Apollo retained in his service at Delphi, was tabooed in Greece until Roman times, and the Maenads took to wine and reappeared under Dionysus's protection.

Jung, however, having no gift for concise expression, nor poetic understanding,[5] nor sense of history, denies that this shorthand ever had any precise meaning. He writes:

> The methodological principle in accordance with which psychology [*he means his own school of psychology*] treats the products of the unconscious is this: "Contents of an archetypal character are manifestations of processes in the collective unconscious. Hence they do not refer to anything that is, or has been, conscious, but to something essentially unconscious. In the last analysis, therefore, it is impossible to say what they refer to . . . There is no longer any question of whether a myth refers to the sun or the moon, the father or the mother, sexuality or fire or water. All we can do is to circumscribe and give an approximate description of an unconscious core of meaning."

Thus he relieves himself of regard for archaeological or historical research. He comes across mystic cyphers which he is unable to solve, and retreats to a position from which he cannot possibly be dislodged. He writes defiantly about:

> . . . the pre-conscious structure of the psyche which was already in existence when there was as yet no unit of personality.

Admittedly, some myths are very puzzling at first sight; but that is often because the mythographer has accidentally or deliberately misinterpreted a sacred picture or ritual drama. I have called such misinterpretation "iconotropy", and instances of it can be found in all sacred literature which sets the seal upon some radical reform of primitive beliefs.

Greek myth abounds in iconotropic instances. The so-called "Judgement of Paris", where a hero is called upon to decide between the rival charms of three goddesses and awards an apple to the fairest, is a relic of an ancient ritual situation, already outgrown by the time of Homer and Hesiod. These three goddesses are one goddess in triad: the Moon as Maiden, Bride and Crone—

[5] In his book on the unconscious poetic mind he dwells most lovingly on the works of Goethe and Longfellow.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Artemis, Aphrodite and Hera—and Aphrodite, the Bride, is in fact presenting Paris with the apple, not receiving it from him. The apple symbolizes her love, but a love bought at the cost of his life. It becomes his passport to the Elysian Fields, the apple orchards of the West, to which the souls only of heroes are admitted. A similar gift was frequently made in Irish and Welsh myth; also by the Three Hesperides, to Heracles; and by Eve, "the Mother of All Living", to Adam. Thus Nemesis, Goddess of the sacred grove who, in late myth, became a symbol of divine vengeance on proud kings, was always pictured with an apple-hung branch, her gift to heroes. All neolithic and Bronze Age paradises were orchard-islands; *paradise* itself means "orchard". "Elysium" seems to be connected with the pre-Gallic word *alisier,* "sorb-apple", which has survived in French; and "Avernus", which the Latins derived from *a-ornis,* "without birds", to be a variant of the Arthurian "Avalon"—Welsh, Afallenan—and to mean "Apple-island".

A science of myth, then, should begin with a study of archaeology, history, and comparative religion, not in the psychotherapist's consulting room. An immense amount of work has still to be done before the great confused corpus of Greek myth that has descended to us can be properly classified. Political or historical myths must be distinguished from ritual or calendar myths—and often they are closely interwoven, as in the epics of the Argonauts and the *Odyssey.* Iconotropic distortion must then be noted, and an attempt made to give each myth its date and provenience: which is usually indicated by the manner of the hero's death—whether he is struck by lightning, flung from a cliff, dragged by wild horses, devoured by hounds, stung by a serpent, shot in the heel with an arrow, disembowelled by a wild boar, drowned in a jar of honey, or torn to pieces by wild women.

When this task has been completed, but only then, psychologists will be able to isolate certain genuinely primitive mythic elements —there may well be such—which have no obvious explanation in history or natural history; and decide whether Jung is right in describing these as:

> . . . archetypes or primordial images which manifest themselves at all times in religion, mysticism, alchemy, as well as in the dreams, visions and fantasies brought to light in the consulting room.

Jung holds that such primordial obsessions are inherited, and I would not contradict him, though it is doubtful how far the ac-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tual image, rather than a predisposition to recognize and perpetuate it, is inherited. Once, in rural Pennsylvania, I was left in charge of a farmer's wife suffering from a nervous breakdown, until an ambulance arrived. Her terrifying performance of Maenad rites fascinated me. She attempted to strangle a child, laughed mirthlessly, shook out her hair, stripped off her clothes, became aggressively nymphomaniac, and prayed to a white anaconic image which she improvised from bandages—this being one of the earliest known symbols of the Goddess as Bride. But how far was her behaviour inherited, and how far had she unwittingly absorbed it from her reading?

Jung states downrightly:

> The primitive mentality does not invent myths; it experiences them. Myths are original revelations of the preconscious psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious psychic happenings.

But hardly any of the Greek myths which he discusses are primitive. For the most part they were formulated in territories which were, or had recently been, in close political relation with Minoan Crete. And Minoan Crete was sophisticated enough to possess written archives, four-storey buildings with hygienic plumbing, and a calendar based on patient astronomic observation.

*

In the first part of their book Jung and Kerényi seek to prove that the "Child-God", as they call him—instancing the Infant Hercules, the Infant Apollo, the Infant Zeus, the Infant Hermes and the Christ Child—is not a carefully chosen pictorial symbol, but a "primordial psychic archetype". Jung writes:

> It is born out of the womb of the unconscious, begotten out of the depths of human nature, a personification of vital forces quite outside the limited range of our conscious mind. It represents the strongest, the most ineluctable urge in every being, namely the urge to realize itself. It is, as it were, an incarnation of the *inability* to do otherwise, equipped with all the powers of nature and instinct, whereas the conscious mind is always getting tied up with its supposed *ability* to do otherwise. The urge and compulsion to self-realization is a *Law of Nature* and thus of invincible power, even though its effect, at the start, is insignificant and improbable. The power is revealed in the miraculous doings of the child hero . . .

Neither Kerényi nor Jung has noticed the most important characteristic of the Divine Child: that Zeus, Dionysus, Apollo,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hercules and the Divine Child of Eleusis—not to mention Mithras, Baldur, Finn, Gwion, the Canaanite Jehovah and the Christ Child[6] were all born at the winter solstice, when the pre-Hellenic year began. This year was ruled by the Triple Moon-goddess and pictorially represented as a Zodiacal circle around which the Spirit of the Year moved like the Sun, changing seasonally, and in varying relation with the Goddess. His life began on the coldest, shortest day, advanced to the longest, hottest day, then declined.

It was convenient to describe this spirit in terms of a hero's progress. He was mothered by the Goddess; and his Epiphany was either on dolphin-back, because the Moon controls the tides; or in a winnowing basket, because the Moon ruled the growth of crops and vegetation. Having strangled the serpents which beset his cradle—serpents symbolized winter and death—he was released at puberty, the Spring Equinox, from his Mother's tutelage, sported with the Maiden-goddess, performed daring feats to prove his manhood and, at Midsummer, was accepted as the lover of the Bride-goddess, who had him ritually killed at the close of their honeymoon. He then became a *hero;* the word denotes sacrifice to Hera. The Goddess spent the second half of the year with his shadow, or other self, or rival, or tanist, or co-king. The life-cycle of the sacred tribal king in neolithic and early Bronze Age times was modelled on this Divine Child myth; which was later modified when his reign, together with that of his co-king, was lengthened from one year to eight, and boy-victims annually sacrificed in his stead.

Jung and Kerényi fail to distinguish these royal child-victims —who appear in myth as Melicertes, Zagreus, Phaethon and the rest—from the infant Spirit of the Year. Indeed, they seem to regard even the Homeric hymns as being of primordial inspiration, unaware that they are polished literary productions written centuries after the Hellenes and the pre-Hellenes had agreed on a compromise religion. This was the Olympian family of six gods and six goddesses, which Zeus ruled, formed by raising local Spirits of the Year to the status of immortal gods and engaging various aspects of the Goddess to complete the divine cast.

Jung approves a heavy apothegm of Kerényi's: "In the symbol the world itself is speaking." He adds, again disclaiming any scientific or even rational view of myths:

---

[6]His birthday had been first variously celebrated on January 6th, April 19th, May 20th or November 17th, but was changed to December 25th by the Church authorities about 354 A.D., to make it correspond with the feast of Mithras.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> The more archaic and deeper, that is the more physiological, the symbol is, the more collective and universal, the more "material" it is. The more abstract, differentiated and specific it is, the more its nature approximates to conscious uniqueness and individuality, the more it sloughs off its universal character and . . . runs the risk of becoming a mere allegory which nowhere oversteps the bound of conscious comprehension and is then exposed to all sorts of attempts at rationalistic and therefore inadequate explanation.

But if he is right in postulating that the more archaic and undifferentiated the symbol, the closer it approximates to the primordial archetype, then the five photographic illustrations in this book, used to support the argument of the Divine Child as an archetype, are most disingenuously chosen. They all show highly literary and sentimental statues of the god Eros: one Alexandrian, three Roman, one sixteenth-century Venetian. As Jane Harrison pointed out long ago in her *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion,* the archaic Eros, "Lust", was either pictured as a Spite—one of the winged abstractions that assail mankind, among them Old Age, Madness and Death—or, more baldly, as a stone phallus, as at Thespiae. It was only in the later red-figured vases that more attractive winged spirits, *erotes,* cluster around their mother and mistress, the Love-goddess Aphrodite—impulses of sexual passion, charming temptations to bear or beget children; but these are conscious allegories, of the sort despised by Jung, and become even less archaic in Roman times.

The Alexandrians started a literary cult of Eros as an irrepressibly naughty boy who never grew up and was for ever making a fool of Aphrodite, his mother, and of Zeus himself, by involving them in humiliating love affairs. (Though Apollonius Rhodius's humour was more delicate than that of his successor Apuleius, the theme is the same.) But that the Alexandrian Eros allegorically carried a torch to set lovers' hearts aflame is no reason for linking him, as Kerényi does, with the archaic Divine Child who renews the genial fire of the year at the Winter Solstice. And it is absurd to allegorize this gift of fire, with Jung, as "the gift of light, the enlarging of consciousness". He writes on this topic:

> Not a few child figures are *culture heroes* and thus identified with things that form the culture: fire, metal, corn, etc.

and then, in a footnote, describes the Christ Child as a fiery-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

natured culture-hero, a bringer of light—misled by Jerome's quotation of Jesus's apocalyptic saying: "He who is near me is near the fire." Jesus was anything but a culture-hero to Jerome, and his words meant something altogether different: that a belief in himself as the Messiah implied a belief in the approaching end of the world, which would come with a rain of fire.

Jung regards myth, in fact, as a delightful timeless world-soup, thickened with innumerable titbits, all alike reduced to a single fundamental, Germanic taste: sample one, sample the lot. This has emboldened him to collaborate with Richard Wilhelm in a work on Chinese mythology, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, quite unaware of the huge gulf between Chinese and Western symbolism. If, for example, a girl "wears the willow" in European folksong, this means that she is sleeping alone in a narrow bed, deserted by her lover; whereas in Chinese folksong it means that she is the most popular performer at the local brothel. Jung has made a similarly irresponsible excursion into the field of mediaeval alchemy, where nobody has yet ventured to check his fantasies—I suppose because Dionysius, the 11th century Byzantine chemist, is not yet available in intelligent translation. Dionysius was a German who broke down the allegorical code of the Spanish metallurgists, translating such prescriptions as: "Marry the she-dragon to the lion, and set her silver egg to hatch under a red cock", into simple chemical formulae.

The second part of the book concerns the Mysteries of Eleusis. Here Kerényi is peculiarly obtuse: he suggests that the initiate had to identify himself with the Goddess Demeter by "being pursued, robbed, raped, failing to understand, raging, grieving and then getting everything back, and being born again." Kerényi does not suggest just how the initiate was symbolically raped; yet explains his confession, preserved by Clement of Alexandria—"I have fasted, drained the mixing bowl, taken [certain things] from the chest, worked [with them] and then put [them] back into the basket, and from the basket into the chest" —by saying:

> . . . the initiate did what the sorrowing and wrathful Demeter also did: fasted and then drank the mixed drink. The mysterious business with the chest and the basket can only be something that Demeter did in the royal household at Eleusis, some action in the service of the queen.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

No! Demeter's mysteries were notoriously akin to Cybele's, of which Clement has again preserved the initiate's confession: "I have eaten from the cymbal, I have drunk from the cymbal, I have carried the dish of offerings, I have gone down into the bridal chamber"; and "worked", *ergasamenos*, was a common Greek expression for performing the sexual act. It is now generally agreed that the initiate's action was a thoroughly masculine one: he entered the bridal chamber and symbolically consummated the holy marriage of the annual corn-king with the Goddess by working some phallic object up and down in a sacred female top-boot.

Again, Kerényi assumes, unhistorically, that the Hellenes introduced barley and the horse into Eleusis, together with the Goddess Demeter; and that Brimos, the Divine male Child of the Eleusinian Mysteries, was really the lost Persephone—because in these primordial uprushes of fancy all distinction of sex is, he holds, lost.

Then Jung, misled by Kerényi's view of the initiate's mystic change of sex, writes of the Goddess with almost Delphic obscurity:

> This figure, when observed in a man belongs to the *anima* type; when observed in a woman, to the type of superordinate personality. It is essentially characteristic of psychic figures that they are duplex or at least capable of duplication; at all events they are bipolar and oscillate between their positive and negative meaning.

He follows this by instances of his patients' dreams in which she allegedly occurs:

> A black-clad countess kneels in a dark chapel. Her dress is hung with costly pearls. She is red-haired and surrounded by the spirits of the dead.
>
> The unknown woman sits, like a dreamer, on the tip of a church spire and stares at him uncannily across the abyss.
>
> She suddenly appears as an old female attendant in an underground public lavatory with a temperature of 40 below zero.
>
> She leaves the house, looking like a *petite bourgeoise*, with a female relation, and in her place there is suddenly an over-life size goddess clad in blue. . . .

Returning once more to Greek mythology, Jung remarks of the Goddess as Maiden:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> Her helplessness exposes her to all sorts of dangers, for instance of being devoured by reptiles or ritually slaughtered like a beast. Often there are bloody, cruel and even obscene orgies to which she falls victim.

But this is not archetypal or primordial myth. The pre-Hellenic Goddess was inviolate in every one of her three aspects. She was the leader, not the victim, of the orgies ("barley-feasts"). But when the Hellenes finally broke the Goddess's power by desecrating her shrines, they decided, it seems, that the best way to keep her priestesses down was to give them a taste of what they had so long imposed on men. Abolishing male child-sacrifice, recorded in a hundred myths, they sacrificed girl-priestesses—Iphigeneia, Helle, Andromeda and the rest. Nor were the elder priestesses spared humiliation: Zeus hung Hera up by her wrists from Heaven with anvils tied to her ankles; Aphrodite was put to public shame in a net; Thetis, the pre-Hellenic Sea-goddess, was married off to a mere mortal and Poseidon took possession of her element.

Chief among his universal archetypes Jung places the "Wise Old Man". Such an archetype may be found among the yellow races, but no trace of it is found in Western mythology. It is true that, in Homer, ancient veterans, such as Nestor, give advice from chimney corners, and practised diplomats, such as Mentor, resolve disputes, and blind bards, such as Teiresias, utter prophecies. But these are not archaic figures; otherwise a wise old god, to whom everyone came for counsel, would surely have been found among the Olympians. The nearest equivalent in Homer to a wise old man is the evasive Proteus, whom he is careful to describe as an Egyptian. Divine wisdom was a female prerogative both at Rome and in Greece; and it was Athene, not Father Zeus, who conferred wisdom on Teiresias. Indeed, Zeus himself visits his old she-cousin Metis for advice when he plans the overthrow of his father Cronos. It is obvious that Jung has been misled by his experiences in the consulting-room, where the "wise old man" of his patients' dreams is not an archetype at all, but a flattering portrait of Jung himself.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THOMAS BARBOUR

Three Poems

I

The Ascent of Venus

Seeing her in the dark wood, the bad boys start,
Pleasantly alarmed among the rare,
Meticulously enameled flowers and grass,
Finer drawn than any emerald hair.

Up into the black air goes the goddess,
Her furious glory staining heaven red;
Two ruddy imps beside are the seraphic
Tenders of her ruined maidenhead.

Wondrously, her easy martyrdom
Rays from the splendid wounding of her thighs;
Rapt, her exquisites receive the stigma
Squarely in their devoutly staring eyes.

II

Deep down in summer among the drone days
where noon is now-and-forever and always golden,
down in the bend of a brook a boy is lazy,
cool in a bowl of the brook in bed among boulders.

Small boy lazy with sun, he has drawn chin-high
the sheet of waters, sent word to the trout
to try the shadow of his knees, and the water-spiders
invited to skate the burnished rink of his chest.

Mid-day broils in the sun, and the birds rejoicing
mount and plunge the quivering air between
water and fire and the tall trees enclosing
all burning summer in green parentheses.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Slowly as flowers blow, the brook is charting
in his arteries a channel; compassionate thighs
trembling rehearse the timidity of trout;
his nerve-ends are the feet of water-spiders.

Deep down in summer where golden days are droning
and now is forever adrowse of a laxy moon,
into a day-full of trees and birds up-reaching,
his arms enfold familiarly the sun.

III

A: Words ugly in the mouth as olives
That glove a challenge to the teeth;
Rhetoric's salt provocatives;
The sharp astringency of grammar.

B: Or as wine-fruit, succulent,
Words that slide along the tongue
Sweetly to throat carousals, boding
Slumberous after-drunkenness.

A: Earth-bred words that worked for Saxons,
Gut and marrow of our utterance;
The public pomp of Roman discourse;
French blandishments and courtesies.

B: I would remember no language, knowing
For love-sigh, death-rattle no translation;
Babel I would circumvent
With charms to make blood-wires hum.

A: My braided speech will cord the mind,
Perplex it into understanding;
Man, by my rigorous exercise,
May feed his manhood's atrophy.

B: I'll borrow birdsong to commute
The narrow sentence of the heart
Into the joy of beasts and angels;
And when I sing, "Fa-la", you'll follow.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HERBERT GOLD

Notes from La Vie de Bohème (Avec Tout Confort)

THE FAMILIAR PARTAKES OF REVELATION in a foreign place. The traveller peeps with astounded eyes at *Lobster à l'Américain* and at the sum of his check in the land of cheap living. The aggressive humility of the men taking sun in a square, their necks as busy as those of birds in their collars: these are the lunch-hour heliotropes of Columbus Circle or the Cleveland Public Square, but in Paris they are *French*. That a sign asks the tourist not to throw flowers in the toilet: even this is Parisian charm. That the performers at a privtae *spectacle* of sexual acrobatics afterwards dress and shake hands with each of the American connoisseurs of such chamber music: this is *politesse*, for the French never leave a room without taking each right hand in individual farewell. ("They say they're good friends," whispers a Marshall Plan secretary at the departing backs of the performing couple, "in real life.")

The old streets of an old city remind him of age, and he returns to his hotel to dream again the nightmares of childhood. The tourist, helpless and blind, returns to his American infancy because he does not share that of those about him; he goes to bed with mouth nibbling over guidebook and phrasebook. Painfully awake during the first months, used and played on, he is syncopated through cunning variations into new rhythms and a questioning of all habit. Bread, words, gestures, staircases, windows, noises, the touch of linen, the smell of dust, the movement of mouths and the muscles which come of new vowels, the new laughter, the new anger, the new children and the very new old people: these summon up once more the dreams of fire, thickened air, and locked rooms mastered by the young American bent on growing up.

A discovery: the possibility of movements of love and hate from which merely his clothes, the little leap of an American step, and the Maine-to-California smile on a people who live in a morality of Happiness are enough to exclude him. This protection weighs heavy on pride. (An acquaintance at the Café Voltaire has offered three thousand dollars for his passport.)

The months pass, and he learns to sleep again. For the French he will always be *le petit Américain*, but the risks of being a tourist are met. He has his habits again. If he still moves crabwise, and his eyes on stalks, through a world whose meanings are lost to him, at least he has enough money and a large enough amiability to be forgiven his sins, *le pauvre petit, il vient d'arriver de l'Amérique, ah oui alors. You are from New-York, le Theque-sas, or Olly-wood? Est-ce vrai que le Coca-Cola donne le cancer?* He is likely to join the American Legion (Paris Post), the Chamber of Commerce, the American Students and Artists Club ("The Center"), buy a season's ticket to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American Theatre, and search out the company of the retired fullback who has lived in Montparnasse for three years while writing the biography of his football coach. Naturally they discuss France, their remarks presaged by a certain conceit: "I have a French friend, and he says. . . ."

The American notion about hospitality often disengages the first sociological bludgeon for a hurt belaboring of the French. After his initial enthusiasm about the café as institution, annex to the family, the university, the marketplace, and the bed, the American lonely for a home begins to wonder why his new acquaintance always proposes Les Oases or Chez Machin for their meetings instead of inviting him to his apartment. He blames the Parisian for a coldness and abstraction; he seems to seek partitions, sparing himself the surrender of reserve implied by the presence of the furniture of a life, which remind him of his lies and sit in judgment on his off-hour dreams. Leaving his new acquaintance, the American strolls the streets at nightfall and listens to the definitive clacking of shutters; one stretch and lean of those inside, and then silence—the family life of these others is blacked out by a long habit of mistrust. Alone, he knows that in a similar situation he would have invited the visitor home.

If he remains in Paris long enough for only four or five meetings among the romantic nervosities of café life, this is the judgment he will carry away: the Frenchman is stifled in armor despite his talk and his insistence on another drink, he lives behind locks, he is afraid of intimacy. "Le domicile est sacré"—this phrase brings a pious policeman glare to all faces. Despite its smell of food and apertifs, its benevolent ease of smoke and gossip, its wickery luxury and its quick confidentiality, the deepest sense of a café is discretion. For the discreet ones, café life is the trapping on the armor, that tassel which distracts an eye from the blade only if it has never seen one before.

After a time, however, his friend will send him a note suggesting dinner for Saturday evening—not at his home, but at a restaurant. And then, finally, having accomplished the ceremonials of late afternoon drinks and a long meal, he will invite him—apologetically—to dine with his family.

"Is it true," asks the astounded Parisian, "that in America you can invite casual acquaintances to eat with you at your own table, and then never see them again?"—a shudder at taking *le domicile* in vain. To him this ease has the relation to responsible hospitality that the whine and the sentiment of an American soldier's harmonica has to real music. "Here," he will explain, "an invitation to my home for an evening meal means that you are becoming a part of my family, and if I fail to see you for a week I will worry that you might be ill and come to ask after you." He sees any intersecting of the circles of career, pleasure, and the family as a bravado in a history hostile to extravagant moral completions; a fatal and complicated Eden is a joke in these times, yet French irony is such as to play this joke at last as a fatality of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

remaining human. With a self-conscious will that *this must be*—and with that smile playing on the nervy nodules of muscle of his language made flesh—the host offers you his home and his friendship. If he rises from the table now and the shutters clack to, it is to shut the others out.

A constant in the reluctance of a Frenchman to let you see his home is the economic *X*; almost all families are aware of decline within their lifetimes, and the process of gradual impoverishment has been a condition of bourgeois life. Most Parisians live in shabbiness or real poverty though they may perform work of skill and power. Doomed to this, but not accepting it as have the Italians, who live within the void of their public future and have given up the justifications of power, there is the shame of those recently fallen. They dwell in urban responsibilities without the use of urban pride. There is an impulse to conceal the pulpy cushions and the children in clumsy shoes.

But this only contributes to a cultural fact which is consistent with the Parisian's life at every turn—his separation of family life from the life connected with his work *en ville*, his impulse to keep his wife unsullied by contact with his friends, his desire to master his family and to guard its purity while he takes the risks of the wide wide world. (Though his wife may have an *ami* whom she meets in a café "from five to seven," he is likely to know outrage only if this appointment interferes with his dinner: he never keeps his wife waiting while he returns from his own *petite amie*.) The marriage of convenience, retaining its propriety at least up until the last war, is still frequent; the two categories of women—wife-mothers and *petites-amies*—are accepted by most Frenchmen, who attend all-male schools from earliest childhood. The attempt to assimilate women to "masculine" life provides one of the clichés of French burlesque of America. Skepticism about the possibility of monogamy associates itself with an assumption all the more stern concerning the sanctity of the home. Divorce is difficult and relatively rare, but the back booths of the cafés are crowded in the late afternoon with couples of all ages busy in their *cinq-à-sept*.

What Bergson called *morsellisation*—an anatomizing of living event into affairs to be filed in compartments—has triumphed in Paris as it does in all commercial cultures. False separations head off real susceptibilities. Everything has its role, its proper moment, in the life of a free citizen; the good life consists in turning up these proprieties—a mistress who knows her place, a money changer with sensibilities and wit about his trade, a way of saving on taxes and investing the gain abroad which does not interfere with the important business of life at home on the rue du faubourg St.-Honoré. What are these important matters? An economy of spirit is not everything, true; but a man must recognize what is possible—a recognition usually associated with the *proper*. Is there someone who disagrees? "Mais la vie est comme ca, mon vieux. On a vécu, quoi." This, the voice of the bourgeois, is the voice of the guardian of all great capitals. He gives us the way of life which we think of as endur-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing, the one which preserves values. Naturally, the word "value" is understood ostensibly, doing the service of the geographer's baton to point to something outside time and men.

Morsellisation offers a sort of security, a logic and a material which is acquiescent to planning and clever book-keeping. This is a function—the ransom of security and dignity—partially accomplished by money in America, but in Paris even the metaphysical uses of money are enfeebled by inflation. You can't save for a rainy day when the concierge tells you that all umbrellas so far known have snapped, rotted, leaked, or skittered off in the first high wind. The French have lived for a long time with governments that don't govern, with money that will not buy tomorrow what it buys today, and in a place where war many soon make human life worth even less than money. The habits of dignity, which include the keeping of secrets, help preserve the sense of dignity. The terrace of an anonymous café near one of the many railway stations can be—under the April sun, under the September sun—the final home of all your uneconomical dreams. And you can still offer yourself a rich-as-blood *coup de rouge* for five or six cents.

Coy about it, hesitant and afraid, giving this gesture of hospitality more weight than is necessary, the man to whom the tourist has presented a letter of introduction at last says: "So come at eight, can you? Will you?"

When a Parisian admits a friend to his home, some of the charm of a café acquaintanceship passes; he is introduced to the pleasures of a family, and to its troubles. He has mounted the hierarchy of a culture built upon class, tradition, and old troubled moralities, to a special level of privilege and responsibility.

Most Americans in Europe prefer the frank generosity offered by Italians. Few stay long enough to see France, which displays the Louvre and Versailles, her splendid false teeth rinsing in glass, because, not only a flirt, she doesn't like to be looked at.

Nevertheless thousands of Americans remain in Paris. Apart from those who come because of a job with the government, private business, or one of the international organizations—for most of these Paris is an appendage to the working day—the largest group is still that of the Bohemes, the experts on eternal truth and irregular hours. The great run of American Bohemia is on the Left Bank, its moral politics swinging from the conservative devotion of the graduate students bent on tenure to the rabid wobblyhood of the beboppers.

Samples: The student of dress designing (GI bill) whose mother sends him comic strips by airmail; the plump damp timid Francophile all hot for the life of Art as a college French teacher, who earned the money for his trip to Europe by selling pornographic postcards obtained in Paris during the war; the six-foot-high graduate of Radcliffe who comes to Paris to write a dissertation on John Donne and takes a Boul' Mich' poet as lover—he tries to jump out the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

window when she first catches him alone in his room, but is trapped in the scaffolding; the litterateur who uses his wife's mother's money to court poets and critics, fancying himself the poor student of Flaubert and Mallarmé but hiring a cook with a high cauliflower hat when he invites his aesthetic friends to dinner. This one, having been an American in Paris for four years, lives in a world of abstractions and gossip, culture and fierce incestuous rivalries with his local compatriots. He ambiguously trots between the ambition to be accepted as court American in an "aristocratic" French world and the sense of his ambition, which is to be invited to the country house of Mme X so that he can wear his pride like a ribbon on his suede vest among his countrymen.

A once-successful radio writer decides that his money will go further among the expatriates of Paris. He has been blacklisted and can no longer find work in New York, but discovers a pleasant home and status among the American political (not "cultural" or "racial") exiles. He listens to recordings of Josh White and recalls his activist past with a group of disconsolate entertainers and pouting journalists with ambitions to eat magnificently and be in-the-know. There is a comic opera pretense of plotting and "biding our time"—like Lenin in Switzerland—but a secret conviction that the "working class" shares nothing of his ideas, not even his opinions on jazz, and that his exile is a matter of personal comfort.

The first four of this cast represent the Americans-in-Paris of old. The cheap-livers, the lovers of Gaul, the romantic and the social climbers, the refined amorists: they were already here to greet Henry James, although the institution has since been fecundated by a spill of American public wealth in the form of fellowships, the GI bill, and so forth. French snobbery for *la vie Américaine* (*le Coca-Cola, la Betty-Grable, le jazz-hot*) has reached the level where an American student can support himself by selling hashish under the name of marijuana.

You still find at the Dôme, the café in which Hemingway is said to have written some of the first Hemingway, the bearded American artist—he is for the ages—who suffers the audible anemia of a man who lives alone, that clacking feebleness of the heart as he enters a room where no one cares about him. Watch him mooch out the good life, which is a tingle something like the sensation the hand of the Luxembourg Gardens puppeteer must enjoy under the skirt of Becassine. The serious drama of his month is the exercise of dialectical skill with a Montparnasse whore, one of those singing mathematicians of love. The next evening, playing the role of cynical grief before her jiggle and her large-pursed bounce, he lights her a Gauloise and leans away from the flame to take the most dramatic light. He moves on, our artist who resists parody like the tubercular, as if he has some creative other thought in his mind, but only *as if*; like the chronically ill, he has precisely nothing in constant and dutiful attendance through the soft yellow-gray afternoons and the chocolate evenings of the Left Bank. He may finally assuage his solitude with some cute American

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

girl barely over the habit of circling her i's and j's, having fled the textbook think-traps for the museum culture-traps. Drink up, girls, for both love and wine will become more expensive: and tomorrow you may be a teacher, or in nine months a mother.

The love-wine-and-beauty bohemes, talking art and abortion in Ivy League blue jeans—"St. Francis is a darling saint, so existentialist, I mean Freudianismly speaking"—still crowd the cafés but in a withering flock. The new model has a research grant, a wife, a beret made of the finest felt, and a vocabulary constructed of the guaranteed latest cultural truths. His eyes run with the yellow crud of scholarship and his pockets rustle with the brittle lint of moving money. Far from Mimi and Rodolphe, he accepts the responsibilities of success and the American Century; he tries to cultivate his colleagues at the Sorbonne and the Collège de France but finds them politically immature, gives a frightened pater familias sniff at the zazous of the Dupont Quartier Latin, and hurries back to America so that his friends will not scramble past him on the treadmill of university promotion. "They're hard to get to know," he says of the French; which is, besides true.

Thet White Russians who trot after tourists to hiss invitations to "an interesting scientific experience, Sir," shake their heads over the last instance, the colony of American political refugees. This group brings a new form to American life abroad despite its links with the past: those who settle in a foreign land because their politics prevent their finding work and because they fear political persecution. That, as individuals, they are mostly unclear about what the heavy words "political persecution" can mean, does not lighten their fears. Their situation is complicated by the efficiencies of modern politics. Some Americans are refused passports to leave the States; others, once here, have had their passports confiscated and have been sent back by State Department, Embassy, or FBI order. An indiscreet word in a café can travel far. "The American passport is a privilege, not a right." —There follow lyric cries about a break for freedom in Czechoslovakia, but they dutifully embark for their Manhattan apartments which they have sublet for six months at a reasonable profit.

Of the two most impressive of the younger French writers, Jean Genet and Raymond Queneau, the first is an orphan outlaw, a prudish homosexual thief and blackmailer singing a moral invocation to what he is pleased to call Evil; the second is a metaphysician of language finding his sources in popular speech, a witty Pythagorean hoaxer dead-earnest about his jokes, an inspired grammarian. Both are intensely self-conscious artists, Genet descending willy or nilly from a French literary tradition including Francois Villon and Balzac's Vautrin, Queneau an erudite working at the lessons of Joyce; neither began by fitting the French cultural ideal of the *homme de lettres*. Yet both are fluttering through the wind-tunnel of publicity and coterie-thinking, those

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

special obligations which have the effect of shoving them past the matter of their effort into the category of performing celebrities. This drafty passage shimmers like the land of milk, honey, and tender justice for visiting Americans. It's worth a look at least, leaving Jean Genet and Raymond Queneau to their proper reward, which is to be read and not gossiped about.[1]

What could be more luxurious than the ripe French assimilation of the esthetic vocations to other professions? Art is located in a world with structure and depth, like the snail expertly buttered, spiced, and replaced in its shell; competent writers are more important in Parisian life than good cooks or even *escargots de Bourgogne*. This status gives the quiet dignity of the Maison de la Societé des Gens de Lettres (grass on the grounds, beards on the Gens) the relation to American literary groups that the New York Athletic Club has to an armpit-haunted Belleville public bath. While in America, poetry (for example) is almost always a solitary vice, clucked over in a family and a poor recommendation to a landlord, in Paris the tradition can make the writer as imposing a personage as Bing Crosby in America or Princess Elizabeth in England. The Academie Francaise, the Academie Goncourt, and lesser corporations; the circles revolving about certain cafés, philosophies, reviews, publishing houses, and commanding individuals; the prestige accorded a number of annual literary prizes greater than the number of variations on the theme of the Rose Bowl; a public interest in writers unfettered by a reading of their works;—such a social texture in which is embedded the lonely joy of putting one word after the next gives meaning to the designation *homme de lettres*. It is more than a *metier* like another; it corresponds in the popular imagination to the film and sporting aristocracy in America, the royal family in England, and the bureaucratic demiurges of the Soviet Union.

In Paris culture is high on the heap. The politicians and generals having defaulted, the champion cyclists turning out to be steady and Swiss or Italians and spectacular up hills, the millionaires laying low or taking their money on the lam into Argentina or the Chase Bank, the descendants of Bourbon or Napoleonic royalty eking out a frugal living by marrying Americans, the boxers KO'd in Detroit and the *chanteurs de charme* senile or touring South America, the *gang-stairs* finding nothing left to rob but Egyptians, Americans, and each other, it has come the turn of immortal beauty & truth. Its practitioners hug the top of the hierarchy with responsible rumps; they wiggle them often enough to merit the attention of those below. Every culture needs a hero, and we select our heros in varied modes but worship them similarly. The

---

[1]Queneau: *Loin de Reuil, Pierrot Mon Ami, Les Exercises de Style*, etc. *Loin de Reuil* has been published as *The Skin of Dreams* by New Directions in an excellent translation by H. J. Kaplan.

Genet: *Le Journal du Voleur, Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs, Miracle de la Rose*, etc. Bernard Frechtman's translation of *Our Lady of the Flowers* has been banned in the United States by the Douane Quixotes charged with inspecting baggage and public virtue, but can be bought at exorbitant prices from the usual bootleggers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clothes, travels, witticisms, diseases, feuds, birthdays, and amorous fortunes of such as Sartre, Cocteau, Gide, Mauriac, Colette, Montherlant, Claudel, and the latest "Goncourt" are discussed with the same loving attention in the French press as those of Joan Crawford in a hieratic fan magazine. The tucking of a napkin under the laureate's chin at a prize dinner can be an event as crucial as the gestures of some la-de-da darling of a Broadway character. Everyone recognizes the effigies among the wax figures of Joan of Arc and the two Napoleons at the Musée Grevin. The light reading of a Parisian office worker on the *metro* is likely to be his weekly *Figaro Littéraire, Opera,* or *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*—three of a selection of artistic patisserie in comparison to which the *Saturday Review of Literature* is weighty fodder. Between the launching of an American battleship and a parade in Red Square, the newsreels report Sartre lighting his pipe in front of the Rose Rouge or Picasso throwing sand at his wife on the beach at Antibes. (How anguished is the flame! how masterful the sidearm sweep!)

Not a day passes without radio interviews of living writers or an "evocation" of a dead one. The interviews are recorded and economically stored for later use, in combination with "original music", as evocations. Death masks, souvenir tag-ends of clothing or hair, and tender anecdotes provide a living for the ghoul-critics and a thrill for the rest of us, who thus partake of glory and buy the memorial edition which includes Z's only unpublished letter, in which he returned the unused portion of a round-trip ticket to Lyon. Exhibitions in his honor will include, besides the usual manuscripts, photographs, and letters, household objects, baby shoes, and his hearing aid if possible.

When Gide died, reporters pursued Jean-Louis Barrault, wearing a mussed toupée and carrying a bouquet of violets, into the room where the body lay. So many photographs of the master appeared that it seemed incredible that Gide, taken up by his duties as a model, could ever have found time to write. The producer of a film about him announced that he would not profiteer on the publicity surrounding the death of his old friend and would wait several weeks before releasing it. Besides, the editing was not yet finished. One of the epidemic of tributes to Gide—everyone wrote one, and those who didn't were approached for comment by Inquiring Reporters—began: "My intimate friend André Gide, whom I last saw in the summer of 1937. . . ." Francois Mauriac, after a lifelong struggle against Gide's skepticism, sent him to purgatory in his column in the *Figaro*, sparing him the expected eternity of burning with a remark that, where he is now, he is busy repenting of his errors. He justifies this lenient sentence by the religiosity to be found in Gide's great joy in a solitary making of his world.

Writers and painters are news; they have status; it's comfortable. There is no doubt about the diffusion of interest in Pacasso or Sartre in the newsreel theater, and some of it may eventually be directed toward their work. Their antics are enjoyed by others than their fraternity brothers. Behind this popular

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

interest in the arts, of course, lie complex and serious justifications. The "classic" character of the language and education, the continuity of a tradition, the values and tensions created in the middle and upper classes, the ambiguous relationship to the state and the Church, and the special history and situation of a capitol such as Paris: these suggest some of the sources. There are rewards for those who offer to fill the social function. But there is a price for being institutionalized.

The price is paid in a danger of abdication of the two great moral roles of the poet: the apocalyptic, which is the will to possession by prophecy—the divine afflatus—and the analytic, the examination of perspectives for a vision of social texture. (Of course there are also other and less moral reasons for any great poet's work.) The prophetic calisthenics are flabbily performed by a man who, listed in the business section of the telephone directory under "Hommes de Lettres", awaits a call from a morning paper to give his opinion on the latest cabinet crisis. The argument that, by becoming *qua* poet a respectable part of the social structure, the man of letters gains a dramatic depth of view is more seductive. The worm in this cheese is that the job of a poet remains all the same a lonely one, one not a corporate endeavor, self-separated from union, club, and class, and only partaking of these respectabilities in its most trivial aspects. The first work of creation does not change essentially under the pressures of machine culture, and the *homme de lettres* who feels that his craft can be compared to the daily effort of a mason or a lawyer is living a lie which will prevent his ever coming to a valid perspective on the lives of lawyers or masons. Literature is not a career like another, despite the successful effort of some writers toward comfort and a place; specialization here makes experts but involves a subtle moral disqualification. (Rimbaud foundered before a problem which includes this one.) Even a weekly book review should be a task essentially different from masonry.

Yet a poet cannot parade his exclusion as a private right. Suffering (*O! le pauvre*) is no longer the high privilege of his cunning. Fifty years ago, when the issues of life and death, love and power, were not yet identified with work, mass populations, total governments, and total war, it was still possible to sing songs of the greatest loneliness and the greatest truth. That the reveries of a Sade, a Kafka, or a Jarry now prove prophetic, demands of their heirs a more responsible sharing in the dirty work of being human. These others, thinking to speak for themselves or for tragic ideals, were social historians of the highest order: often—a tribute to genius but worse luck for us—in advance of their society. Reading Alfred Jarry today we hear a rustle of the ashes from the crematoriums, we watch a shift of the frozen chemical shadows of Hiroshima, we fall among the groans of the bodies in forced labor as these destroyed creatures, who are only as guilty of being human as the rest of us, join to cry out, "Vive Ubu!"—this, being no longer merely a great joke, has a tendency forever to alter the lonely estate of poetry. If *Ubu Roi*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

remains a burlesque and a happy trick, well, that's a tribute to the will to life in those left alive.

This is what we have given up for what we have learned: it's a trick in which we no longer presume to use masks. We must recognize ourselves among the actors; we should still laugh. Here is the theater-in-the-round we must dare to play in.

The dilemma for those who presume to speak for the time left us is compounded by knowledge that participation must imply a partial acquiescence in horrors, and yet only in this hard yielding can disapproval have meaning. Neither our disapproval nor any other judgment can annull our participation. (I mean by "participation" a state of casual involvement.) We're up to our necks. Not even Dante had it that hard during the most responsible literary voyage yet recorded. At least—*and from the beginning*—he had a good chance to attain the third part of the trilogy, although in our recollections of his tour he is mostly seen fixed, and Virgil too, deep in the inferno and far from divinity. *Terza rima* serves the technical uses of his language better than it does the symbolic use predicted.

Still, by his deeds and by grace, he is confident of being guided finally upward. Our world is busy telling us that this is, alas, the life of Jewish vision: salvation, if at all, here below.

In the end, because each demands a further responsibility, either the isolation or the assimilation to other work of the American writer (states having much in common) seems preferable to the moral *tout confort* of Parisian literary life. Isolated, the caustic of a man comes into full play, despite the danger of an arty frothing, and one essential characteristic of creative effort can be faced in its extreme condition: its willed loneliness. Or, for a farmer like Faulkner, a business man like Wallace Stevens, or a teacher like everyone else, the soreness of divided attention acts against the knowledgability of a conditional running with the pack to make possible the flight of passion off experienced fact which seems the only valid one—the one to which we still have a right.

Any remarks on this subject, however hortatory in tone, can only work as a way of judging although they may be stated as prescriptions. What *la vie de bohème*, and its partner in incest, the life of official art, imply is that the writer's self-consciousness is enough. Such artists may grant research its uses, a deliberate "experiencing"; they remain incapable of the sort of responsible participation in society which creates both persons and individuals. What the writer writes about has to be something which he knows *not* as an artist in addition to the special perspectives which he always brings to the matter of his life. Without this causal involvement in some way as a non-artist, the special consciousness of self suspended, he forfeits the possibility of his eye-and-heart's ever having anything important but itself to work on. This self-consciousness alone is important; it is no longer sufficient, nor ever really was.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Everyone whimpers about the risks and obstacles to life in America for the artist. There is no point in beating the dead horse of American cultural immaturity; it will stay as dead as usual. I want to suggest that, in a world like ours, the risks of that cultural privilege which we like to imagine for a golden age are greater and more grave than the risks of faulty connections. That is, more grave for what is essential to the artist: his first demand on himself to know and to make. The golden age returns for but an instant among the aroma of the madeleines while chatting of Proust with a Gallimard editor at one of the afternoon teas.

*

On the Boulevard St.-Germain, near the Odéon, there is a plaque indicating "The League for the Defense Against the Enemies of Culture—Second floor to the left."

Ne pas jeter des fleurs dans les aisances, S.V.P.

BEN JOHNSON

Rome Letter

Not since Roger Ascham, in the sixteenth century, set pen to paper to condemn with a stream of Protestant invective the "fond books of late translated out of Italian into English [and] sold in every shop in London", have "the enchantments of Circe" enticed so many readers of the English-speaking community as they have since the War: the present enthusiasm for Italian writing is matched only by that of Elizabethan times, when Machiavelli, Castiglione, Boccaccio and others became as well known in literary circles abroad as Elio Vittorini and Moravia today. With Italian literature again to be found in every shop in London, and New York too, the term "renaissance" is being bruited about; indeed, in the past seven years one would hardly dare estimate the number of typewriter ribbons that have been worn out by critics writing of the post-war literary revival in Italy.

But whereas Renaissance Italians were aware of the greatness of their great men, there is here today, however startling this may seem to an American or Englishman, not the slightest feeling in any really informed quarter that post-war Italy is experiencing a resurgence of good or even mediocre writing. The present "renaissance" is in part the hardy figment of Anglo-American publishers' imaginations and in part the not unnatural outcome, stemming from the critical successes of films like *Roma, città aperta, Sciuscià, Vivere in pace, Paisà,* and *Ladri di biciclette,* of an expectation of a general artistic revival.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the past seven years considerably more than three score books have been translated from Italian and published in Britain or the United States; some, like Leopardi's *Canti* and Manzoni's *I promessi sposi*[1]—Nineteenth Century classics— do not fall within the compass of this discussion, and others, like the books of Guareschi and Marotta—works of a jokesmith and of a journalist appealing to the clichés and catch-phrase emotions of the shopgirl mentality can safely be disregarded if one's considerations are to remain literary. Of the books and writers that remain, only a few of the better known need be mentioned to indicate the essential flimsiness of the current "renaissance". One of the best was, not surprisingly, one of the first: Carlo Levi's *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*,[2] published here in 1946. Part essay, part autobiography, in it Levi recounted his two years (1935-6) spent in *confino* in Lucania. About this book much was said, and certainly most of the good things were said with abundant justification. Pietro Pancrazi, for instance, before he had completely recovered from the impression the book made upon him, wrote, "Books appear daily about which one really does not know what to say; but this book of Levi's is one that can be read and discussed because of its descriptive passages, [Levi's knowledge of] mores, its history, its ideology—even its magic quality." The book was published in a score of countries, and although in retrospect it may seem less important, it remains a human document of considerable significance. The following year, 1947, another ex-prisoner, whose *confino* had been spent in a Texas PW camp, published *Il cielo è rosso,* the story of four children forced into the responsibilities of adulthood, struggling to eke out an existence in war-crippled Treviso, and ultimately succumbing to the rigors left in the aftermath of bombardment. Composed with beauty and simplicity of language, marked throughout by an almost Sophoclean *klang* of tragedy, *The Sky Is Red* (coupled with *Christ Stopped at Eboli*) seemed for a time to make a good case for those who saw a literary renaissance getting under way. While he has always denied the statement on the dust jacket of one of his books, that "out of the crucible of war in Italy has come an inspiring artistic renascence," Giuseppe Berto[3] has to a great extent, with *Le opere di Dio* (1948) and *Il brigante* (1951), contributed toward keeping that idea alive, despite one's finding that he has not, in his later works, completely succeeded in evoking the bewitched atmosphere, the storied ambience and pathos of *Il cielo è rosso.*

Next came a Florentine ex-jack-of-all-trades, Vasco Pratolini,[4] author of four early books of no particular distinction—*Il tappeto verde* (1941), *Via*

---

[1]Alessandro Manzoni: *The Betrothed.* A new translation by Archibald Colquhoun. Dutton. 1951.

[2]Carlo Levi: *Christ Stopped at Eboli,* 1947; *Of Fear and Freedom,* 1950; *The Watch,* 1951. Farrar, Straus and Young.

[3]Giuseppe Berto: *The Sky is Red,* 1948; *The Works of God,* 1950; *The Brigand,* 1951. New Directions.

[4]Vasco Pratolini: *A Tale of Poor Lovers,* 1949. Viking. *A Hero of Our Time,* 1951. Prentice-Hall.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dei magazzini (1942), *Le amiche* (1943), and *Cronaca familiare* (1944). Then Vallecchi published his *Cronache di poveri amanti* in 1947. Calling to mind the spectre again stalking Europe, laboring the thesis that whoever does not resist tyranny condones it, cluttered with more characters than the reader can comfortably keep in mind, the novel, despite its faults, is well written and is remembered for more than a few felicitous scenes. Pratolini is not without talent, as he demonstrated in the novella *Le ragazze di Sanfrediano* (published in *Botteghe Oscure III* and translated into English for *The New Italian Writers*[5]); essentially, however, he is a gifted pamphleteer (cf. his gauche *Un eroe del nostro tempo*, 1949). At all events, *A Tale of Poor Lovers*, with which Pratolini's British and American début was launched, was foisted upon readers as continuing evidence of an Italian renaissance.

Less a craftsman but more highly regarded than Pratolini (in Britain and America, at least), is Alberto Pincherle, a motion picture scenarist who writes under the nom-de-plume of Alberto Moravia.[6] Under the Fascists—leaving aside his remarkable first novel, *Gli indifferenti*—his name appeared as author of some of the most humdrum books of the period. When his third book—*Le ambizioni sbagliate* (*Mistaken Ambitions*)—was issued in 1935, one critic was prompted to remark that the greatest of all mistaken ambitions was Moravia's, in thinking himself a novelist. And it was not until after the war, with books like *Agostino* and *La romana*, that it became apparent what had been the trouble. With *Gli indifferenti*, in which he had reached to the uttermost limits of decorum and good taste, he had said his say. His passion was pornography, and it was not until 1945, with the Fascist ban against pornography lifted by Allied and partisan arms, that he could indulge himself. The uncritical public acclaimed *Agostino*, one of his better works, as a minor masterpiece, and *La romana* became a bestseller. But Moravia's matter-of-fact, occasionally journalistic style had changed very little; only his treatment of the subject matter. (In repeatedly attacking *prosa d'arte* he has in effect claimed not to be concerned with writing well.) No Italian critic was unaware of this, nor was Moravia himself. As late as last January, in an interview published in *La Fiera Letteraria*, Moravia declared, "Italian critics tolerate me with ill-concealed impatience. For the most part, they are antagonistic toward me; were I to slip and fall on the peeling of an unsuccessful work, they would be overjoyed. That's all they're waiting for. It's their greatest desire."

In private Moravia has confided that his work is designed as an indictment of bourgeois morals. However true that may be, one is invariably more struck, I think, by the fact that his female characters, with their doll-like faces, their pneumatic bosoms, their orientation toward bedrooms, seem always to have

[5] *The New Italian Writers*, an Anthology from *Botteghe Oscure*. New Directions. 1950.

[6] Alberto Moravia: *The Woman of Rome*, 1949; *Two Adolescents*, 1950; *Conjugal Love*, 1951; *The Conformist*, 1952; *The Fancy Dress Party* (forthcoming). Farrar, Straus and Young.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stepped from the pages of *Tropic of Cancer* or *Sexus*. What, for instance, can one say of the following random passage from *La romana*—

> Quando fu nudo, mi inginocchiai tra le sue gambe e presi il suo sesso tra le palme, simile ad un fiore bruno, e, per un momento, me lo premetti contro la guancia e i capelli, forte, chiudendo gli occhi. . . .

which reads like a *louche* leaf from Henry Miller, and, like other such passages, was of course not rendered into English?

Moravia worked on his most recent novel, *Il conformista,* for two years, and it runs to nearly 400 pages. Its theme, the bankruptcy of middle-class values, is the same as that of *Gli indifferenti,* and for the first two hundred pages or so, it is scored with an acerb contempt reminiscent of the author's first literary incursion. Mid-way through the book, however, Moravia seems to lose control, and his story caroms from one pointless episode to another, through the inevitable pornography, until it finally jolts to a stop in unspeakable bathos, with one of the most disappointing and contrived endings he has yet devised.

But to assert that Moravia is a poor novelist is not to say that he is a poor writer or that he is not an important literary figure. His importance in contemporary letters rests solidly on the indisputable fact that with *Gli indifferenti* (and the critical boosting of G. A. Borgese) he rescued the Italian novel from the blind alley of Fragmentism. In his short stories, moreover, and in certain short novels, he has made a notable contribution to modern Italian literature: he is, despite his protestations to the contrary, himself essentially a Fragmentist. And one can rejoice in good conscience that all of the short stories he has written since 1927—those contained in *L'imbroglio, La bella vita, L'amore coniugale, L'amante infelice,* and *Le due cortigiane*—are now being assembled for a 600-page volume to be published by Bompiani; but it is cause for lively concern that a fine writer of short fiction is accorded inordinate, almost hysterical praise in America and Britain for his third-rate novels, and is virtually neglected in the area of his freshest produce.

In a cursory appraisal of Italian writers today, Moravia must perforce be accorded a disproportionately large space, because his reputation, unfortunately, looms larger in the mind of the American reader than that, say, of Manzoni or Verga. This, I suspect, is equally true of Elio Vittorini[7]; but in summing up Vittorini's achievement, one of Italy's most distinguished critics, Salvatore Rosati, has written that he "recklessly interlards his books with recent American technical innovations to the point of putting on the not-new spectacle of a translator becoming completely dominated by the authors he has translated." Rosati's spade-work has recently been followed by chapter-and-verse citations by professor Mario Praz, proving beyond all question that Vittorini is not so much a creative artist as a conscientious imitator of Hemingway.

[7]Elio Vittorini: *In Sicily,* 1949; *Twilight of the Elephant,* 1951; *The Red Carnation* (forthcoming). New Directions.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Finally, a few words about two men—Mario Soldati and Guglielmo Petroni—who have been discovered for America and England by Princess Marguerite Caetani's biannual, trilingual review *Botteghe Oscure* and published in translation in her anthology *The New Italian Writers*. Soldati has been writing since 1929, but his published works have been relatively few and rather far between: for a living he is dependent upon film writing and directing; Petroni, an editor of *La Fiera Letteraria*, but dependent upon Radio Italiana for a livelihood, has published even less, his finest pieces being the two which have appeared in *Botteghe Oscure I* and *IV*: *Il mondo è una prigione* and *La casa si muove*. Of these two writers, Soldati is the better, and, in *The New Italian Writers* and last year in *World Review*, he has been excellently translated; whereas Petroni's *La casa si muove* appeared in a translation that reflected no particular credit on either translator or author. Both men, however, are worth looking up.

Having written this much, I do not wish to suggest that Levi, Berto, Soldati and Petroni are the only Italian writers today worthy of serious consideration; rather that they are, except for Soldati, who has been writing for twenty-three years, the only genuinely gifted writers to appear since the War. There remain, however, at least ten men writing prose to rival the best to be found anywhere. It is cause for regret that they, modern masters with reputations beyond cavil here and elsewhere in Europe, are barely known in the English-speaking world. But at this late date a checklist at least is needed, of their major works:

Corrado Alvaro—Novels: *Vent'anni, L'uomo è forte, L'età breve;* Essays: *Cronaca (o fantasia)*; Short stories: *L'Amata alla finestra, Incontri d'amore, Gente in Aspromonte, La signora dell'isola*; Travel: *Viaggio in Turchia, Itinerario italiano;* Journal: *Quasi una vita;* Poetry: *Poesie grigioverdi, Il viaggio.*

G. B. Angioletti—Novel: *Donata;* Short stories: *Il buon veliero, Il generale in esilio, Il giornio del giudizio;* Travel: *L'Italia felice, Vecchio continente.*

Riccardo Bacchelli[8]—Novels: *Il mulino del Po, Il pianto del figlio di Lais, Lo sguardo di Gesù, La città degli amanti, Mondo vecchio, sempre nuovo, Il fiore della mirabilia;* Short stories: *Acque dolci e peccati, L'elmo di Tancredi, Il brigante di Tacca del Lupo, Lo sa il tonno.*

Antonio Baldini—Short stories: *Michelaccio*; Travel: *Italia di Bonincontro, La vecchia del Bal Bullier;* Essays: *Il sor Pietro, Cosimo Papareschi e Tuttaditutti, Fine Ottocento, Buoni incontri d'Italia;* Autobiography: *Se rinasco.*

Vitaliano Brancati—Novels: *Don Giovanni in Sicilia, Vecchio con gli stivali, I piaceri, Il bell'Antonio.*

Emilio Cecchi—Essays: *Pesci rossi, L'osteria del cattivo tempo, Corso al trotto;* Travel: *America amara, Messico, Et in Arcadia ego;* Criticism: *La poesia di G. Pascoli, Studi critici, Scrittori inglesi e americani, Emily Dickinson* (with Giuditta Cecchi).

[8]Riccardo Bacchelli: *The Mill on the Po.* Pantheon. 1950.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ALDO PALAZZESCHI—Novels: *Sorelle Materassi, Due imperi . . . mancati, I fratelli Cuccoli;* Short stories: *Stampe dell'800, Il palio dei buffi;* Poetry: *I cavalli bianchi, Lanterne, Poemi, L'Incendiario.*

ALBERTO SAVINO—Novel: *Infanzio di Nivasio Dolcemare;* Stories: *Achille innamorato, Tragedia dell'infanzia, Tutta la vita;* Biography: *Narrate, uomini, la vostra storia;* Essays: *Dico a te, Clio.*

BONAVENTURA TECCHI—Novels: *I Villatàuri, Giovani amici, Valentina Velier;* Short Stories: *Il nome sulla sabbia, La presenza del male, Il vento tra le case, Isola appassionata, La signora Ernestina, Creature sole, Tre storie d'amore;* Essays: *Antica terra, Idilli moràvi;* Journals: *Vigilia di guerra, 1940, Un'estate in campagna.*

GIORGIO VIGOLO—Prose: *La città dell'anima;* Poetry: *Canto fermo, Il silenzio creato, Conclave dei sogni, Linea della vita.*

To this group of men must be added the name of one woman, whose reputation in Italy is rather comparable to Virginia Woolf's in Britain and America:

GIANNA MANZINI—Novels: *Tempo innamorata, Lettera-all'editore;* Stories: *Rive remote, Venti racconti, Un filo di brezza, Incontro col falco, Boscovivo, Forte come un leone, Ho visto il tuo cuore.*

That a large body of the work of these writers will be read here twenty-five or fifty years hence, is unquestioned. Palazzeschi, who is generally regarded as Italy's foremost living writer, has already been read for nearly a half-century; Alvaro, who is by no means so old, is at present enjoying a certain vogue as a result of the *succès d'estime* of his *Quasi una vita*: Bompiani is now bringing out all of his early fiction; etc. In a country where no book which has not become a classic is capable, regardless of its popularity, of selling more than 15,000 copies, where a sale of 6,000 copies makes a novel a bestseller, it is a wonder that Italy has now, and has had in recent years, so many good writers. One thinks affectionately of Grazia Deledda, Italo Svevo, Pirandello, Alfredo Panzini, and others. With unerring regularity, every few years a good writer turns up; but since the War this has not come about so often that one can properly speak of a renaissance; rather, so seldom that one cannot help but remember Baudelaire's words: "S'attendre que d'une grande guerre puisse naître un grand art c'est se vouer à une désillusion."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILLIAM BECKER

Missing: A Milieu for Theatre

Savez-vous ce qui me manque? Un milieu. Oui, je n'ai pas de milieu.
—Jacques Copeau to Andre Gide.

ONE FAVORITE APOLOGETIC CLICHÉ of the Broadway Intelligentsia comes in the form of a complaint about the "inexorable conditions" of the theatre's existence. On all sides, these conditions are invoked to explain the absence of serious values in the theatre, to account for acquiescence or inactivity, to support the inevitability of the *status quo,* to justify a variety of private snobberies, in short, to assert that things are as they are and nothing can be done. When pressed, the complainants ordinarily reveal that what they mean by "conditions" is a matter of economics and the end of their argument involves some restatement of the need for a subsidized theatre in which we can all be emancipated from the tyrannical claims of the box-office. The assumption seems to be that the theatre is inhabited by hoards of mute, inglorious Shakespeares, Duses, Coquelins, and Stanislavskis who merely want release from the cash nexus to bring the theatre to a state of brilliant, vigorous, continuing health.

Now it is probably true that the theatre as we know it is limited in its operations by conditions more restrictive than those which limit any other form of creative or intellectual activity. It is probably also true that short of outright subsidy there is little to be done about the cash nexus—if we take that to be the essential restriction. But, there seems to me good reason for questioning the assumption that economic "conditions" are the only ones, or even that they underlie other obstructive situations in theatre. There seems to me even better reason for questioning the assumption that we could do something useful with economic freedom if we had it.

For, in a general way, one can say that there is a life which is proper to theatre and which the American theatre has not yet been able to attain. This life involves an orientation in the culture at large—and consequently (though perhaps more importantly) a real milieu for those who work within the theatre and also those serious audiences who habitually partake of it. Henry James perceived just such an orientation in the Parisian stage when he wrote from France in 1876: "That the theatre plays in Paris a larger part in people's lives than it does anywhere else is by this time a fact too well established to need especial comment. It is one of the first facts that comes under the observation of the resident foreigner, who very soon perceives that the theatre is an essential part of French civilization, in regard to which it keeps up a lively process of action and reaction. It is not a mere amusement as it is in other countries; it is an interest, an institution, connected through a dozen open doors with literature,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

art, and society." Supporters of the ideal of the *gesamtkunstwerk* are constantly reminding us that the theatre is "the meeting place of all the arts"; and, special polemics aside, there is a sense in which the observation is certainly true. Not only because theatre is a collaborative art, but also because it is so ephemeral a one—which means that its resources are firmly limited by the present—the theatre in its healthiest state ought constantly to be informed by (note: not necessarily composed of) contemporary advances in other areas of expression. Other arts consistently refresh themselves from the past via rediscovery. The theatre has little such access: it is always discovering the present from the present. It therefore needs the richest possible present to work from. It needs to derive its continuity from its relations with activities that are not so impermanent. It needs, for its very survival as an art, to have an enabling context.

It used to be fashionable to observe that the imaginative life of America was fractured and incoherent and that the isolated pieces of it were alienated not only one from the other but from the general flow of American society as a whole. It is no longer fashionable to say so, but the situation has not essentially changed. And since theatre is the most consistent victim of this special brand of cultural chaos, the American theatre cannot be said to "belong" any more than it ever did. Yet this sense of belonging cannot be imposed from the outside; it has to emerge from within the theatre itself, and this means that individual workers in the theatre have an obligation (to no one so much as to themselves) to relate their lives and their imaginations to a context larger than Broadway and to invite the collaboration of the rest of the imaginative and intellectual life of America. But the opposite situation persists, and it is neatly observable: any number of given instances of Broadway life could serve to illustrate the general predicament.

To take a situation which touches any would-be serious critic of theatre very deeply, there is almost no commerce between Broadway and the world of ideas. Anyone who has worked in the theatre must have become aware that there is an agressive conspiracy among theatre people to think of intellectuals as somehow anti-theatrical, or to suppose that to be genuinely of the theatre is requisitely to be anti-intellectual. The few intellectuals who venture observations on the Broadway scene are commonly dismissed as unworthy of attention because they are not, in theatrical jargon, "*of* the theatre". Remarks of this kind involve a paradoxical assumption to which even those who believe that most "commercial" theatre is "bad" seem to assent. For the idea appears to be that unless one is of the "bad" theatre, one is not of the theatre at all—a huddled and defensive piece of jingoism rather like "my country: right or wrong". Yet it is, like all jingoism, a dangerous mystique since it alienates the worker in the theatre from the very group that might prove his most useful ally at the same time that it forces him into an uncomfortable alliance with those same forces which in any other context he would pretend to despise.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The other side of this penny worn very thin is, of course, what seems to be the anti-theatrical conspiracy of intellectuals. If, as we often hear, America has had a renaissance of critical thinking in the past several decades, the obvious question is why the renaissance has not touched the theatre at any crucial point. Is there any art more in need of analysis (of the kind the "new" Criticism has provided) than the theatre? Is there any audience less equipped to enjoy difficult pleasures than that which attends the theatre? Perhaps it would be too much to ask for some adaptation of New Critical principles to a specifically *theatrical* criticism of theatre; but even a literary approach would be something. For to the extent that plays employ language, the theatre is subject to literary considerations; and to that extent it is also in need of them. Yet now that Stark Young has retired and Francis Fergusson is engrossed in Dante, only Eric Bentley among the many established American intellectual critics devotes any considerable portion of his energies to writing well about theatre. The fact is doubly depressing, since in no field is the "use" of criticism more clear: for it ought to be obvious that every time a play is staged, a critical function is being performed. In a decent milieu, the intellectual would have a job to fulfill just as crucial to the theatre at large as any job inside the theatre itself. And, of course, in a decent milieu, the critic would have an active audience for his writings. But now, there is no such thing as criticism on Broadway; there is only praise and blame. And Broadwayites are as utterly indifferent to real criticism as they are prostrate before the snap-judgements of journalism.

Humanly more devastating, the position of the actor in New York reveals this same lack of a proper milieu. To what does an actor belong? What status can he be said to have? Only the very best have even commercial status as commodities regularly in demand. And almost none have genuine artistic status: their working lives progress as anxiously and haphazardly and discontinuously as their incomes. How is it possible for actors to think of themselves as artists when their lives have nothing of the continuity, nothing even of the sense of its being a *life,* that being an artist demands? What little sense of community exists and what little artistic development there is, comes not from the everyday working theatre, but from private associations like friendship and from the three or four little studios where actors take classes and prepare scenes that are never performed except for each other. Elsewhere in the world, the actor belongs first to a group with a programme that is constantly a matter for thought and secondly to the world of arts in general with all its polemic variety of which he is in some sense a tiny reflection. The ordinary European actor not only has a status but is self-consciously sustained by it. The ordinary American actor is self-conscious only in the way of vanity, almost never in a critical way. The world he inhabits never persuades him to look out toward the larger world of ideas, of history, of knowledge, to which he as a performing artist ought to be contributing, and by which he is ultimately defined and given a status. The few extraordinary American actors who manage to have a private continuous

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vision of their careers are constantly obstructed in implementing it. And the lack of any milieu from which they can draw sustenance or refresh their visions in dry seasons leaves them in perpetual danger of losing themselves. It takes a superhuman exercise of will to keep quarrying (in Yeats's phrase) all one's own stone for one's monument.

What a fertile milieu does is to keep us always aware of the hidden resources in what theatre we do have. Yet the one indigenous American form of theatrical expression, the modern dance, took twenty-five years to badger its way even to its present uncertain position in the Broadway musical. And even at that, modern dance has never really been absorbed: it has merely been injected, exploited without being explored. It has not essentially affected the *form* of Broadway musicals, for, with a few exceptions (*The King and I* is one), one merely finds that the real action of the performance is temporarily suspended while there is a dance or ballet sequence and then resumed according to the design of the authors. The choreography remains pretty much independent. Thus the creative possibility of dance for the enriching of a whole theatrical event is largely neglected, and the dance exists on Broadway more by way of a parenthesis or a footnote than by way of a true resource. In some ways, the modern dance movement appears to exist in a somewhat more satisfactory and coherent way than the theatre at large. It seems, on the face of it, to have developed a sort of milieu of its own. It draws more freely on serious American composers and designers who normally work outside the theatre. It has real and creative relations with important developments in modern thought: perhaps especially with anthropological and psychological speculation from Frazer and the Cambridge group, through Freud and Jung to, say, Joseph Campbell. It has integrated itself into academic disciplines larger than itself at schools like Bennington and Sarah Lawrence and Juilliard, and it occupies a solid place in the curriculum of one of the best schools for actors in New York—the Neighborhood Playhouse. Yet it retains more the character of a cult wanting a real place in a larger milieu than of an integrated artistic phenomenon. The performing life of most modern dancers is as discontinuous and indeterminate as that of most actors. For traditional ballet dancers, there are two companies that perform regularly in New York—The New York City Ballet and Ballet Theatre—but for modern dancers, there are only occasional hole-in-the-wall concerts at high schools and trade schools and the YMHA auditorium. And since most of these concerts consist of solos, the modern dancer who merely wants to perform, and who cannot or is not ready to choreograph for himself, is hard-pressed for any sort of professional life at all. Moreover, while Broadway remains undisturbedly ignorant of the newer gropings and departures of modern dance, there can be no sense of *contributing* to the theatre as a whole or even of participating in it.

One could go on. What is true of thinkers and actors and dancers is also

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

true in special ways of writers, directors, painters, choreographers, composers, and so on. One often hears that the American theatre is sick: as if it were a real organism varying in its health from season to season, yet retaining through it all a certain identity signifying a meaningful and developing life. If this were true, the American theatre would have a history. But this is precisely what is not true; and would-be reformers of the theatre make a mistake in supposing it to be so. The American theatre has no real history; it has only a past—isolated parcels of achievements and inachievements, precariously suspended, as it were, like the branches of a tree without a trunk. And this incoherent, fragmented past is exactly mirrored in the present: it is not reform that the American theatre needs, but something much more primary—some kind of form to begin from. But it would be silly to suppose that one could impose this form through a single programme. What coherent theatre we knew in the twenties and thirties was the result of such exterior pressures: in the twenties, the pressure of expatriation and return, the imitation of Europe; and in the thirties, the pressure of politics, the imitation of a point of view. But these pressures from the outside create only apparent health and promote only temporary activity. The pressure that is wanted is an interior and a more general one: it can be neither a single idea nor a special mystique, but some impulse toward cohesion—what I have called the sense of a milieu. And to this end, it is only to be hoped that workers in and around the theatre, out of the baldest desperation, will begin to preceive individually that the job of opening the doors James noted is largely up to them.

Meanwhile, our attempts to subsidize parcels of the existing chaos will be just as pointless and inconclusive as the past winter's seasons at ANTA and the City Center. Is it impertinent to enquire what these two organizations have done that ordinary commercial managements could not have done as well or better? In what way have they departed from or added to the standard Broadway production pattern? In what way have they met the special obligation that derives from their relative financial security? At ANTA, the gesture that substituted for a programme was the requirement that all the plays should be American ones. And surely there is a kind of irony apparent in the fact that the administrators of ANTA were hard put to find five satisfactory American plays, new or old. The result was that after the opening production of *Desire Under the Elms,* the season went to pieces. Two of the following productions, a mediocre *Golden Boy* with John Garfield and the Stein-Thomson *Four Saints in Three Acts,* did not even originate with ANTA: *Golden Boy* was somewhat reworked and recast from a production Garfield had toured in, and *Four Saints* was being prepared in any case for a showing at the recent arts festival in Paris. A third play, Mary Chase's *Mrs. McThing,* was a poorly written fantasy, obviously inserted in the season to exploit Helen Hayes's popular appeal; it had, as George-Jean

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nathan has already observed, no business in the repertory of a National Theatre. Even more out of place if possible was the hastily-chosen final play, *Sunday Breakfast*: a cliché portrait of a bickering family, that was remarkable in the season for being very badly directed (it's merely ludicrous to begin with hysteria and sustain it unrelievedly for two hours). ANTA was announced some years ago with the same high-sounding, self-conscious verbiage of idealism beneath which every pretentious departure in New York now hides. But that it is useless to subsidize the general claim of purity, integrity, and devotion to "art" ought by now to be clear. For these assertions, the common assumptions of a decent cultural milieu, are meaningless even when there is no milieu to render them irrelevant. It is the particular assertions of particular departures that matter: the programme, not the motive; the idea, not the ideal; the method, not the madness. And it is just these that a milieu for theatre, if we had one, would demand.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BEATRICE GOTTLIEB

The Stage Personality of Martha Graham

MARTHA GRAHAM IS A PHENOMENON SO SPECIAL that we lack convenient phrases with which to discuss her. She is not just another modern dancer, although she epitomizes modern dance for many, for her overdevoted followers as well as for those who have only the vaguest ideas on the subject. Many of her admirers, however, are not especially interested in dancing. Theatre critics like her fresh and stimulating manipulation of the theatre's facilities. They are attracted by her emphasis on the human figure, on theatrical action as *gestural* rather than verbal. Yet of the many good reasons one can find for liking Graham not a few apply to other dancers as well. Why is Graham singled out? There is, above all, her *stage personality,* a powerful creation larger and more interesting than her individual works. The more one sees of Graham, who is a notoriously difficult artist to like directly and spontaneously, the stronger becomes the impression of a single personality and a steady purpose on which each new work sheds light. And under the spell of the personality one ignores the flops and banalities—which she provides in good measure—and is merely thankful that Graham is a prolific composer.[1]

A "stage personality", as I wish to define the term, is in many respects entirely unlike a virtuoso. A virtuoso is a skilled and graceful performer, and by virtuosity we often imply the ability to accomplish anything in a certain medium. Graham's technique as a dancer is considerable, but it is not the flexible technique of a virtuoso; some of her supporting dancers are much more virtuoso than she. She has never given us a display of virtuosity except as something entirely in character, so that it is hardly noticeable. In this way she is like Chaplin and other great comic actors. Chaplin does not try to convince us of his great range; he uses what appears at second glance to be an impressive technique almost entirely in the service of a limited stage personality. Stage personalities are in fact found frequently among comedians. Chaplin is always the personality we have come to expect him to be; the change is in the situations in which he finds himself. Thus, what keeps the audience interested, from the ten-year-old howling with glee to the drama student making notes for his book, is the ingenuity with which, in terms of the familiar personality, Chaplin will respond to the unfamiliar stimulus. Even comedians who are not as great as Chaplin tend to define their personalities, and in the different roles they assume we always look for the glimmer of

[1]One *can*, of course, distinguish Graham's successes from her failures. No accounting of America's highest artistic achievements should omit *Every Soul is a Circus, Letter to the World, Herodiade, Deaths and Entrances,* and *Errand into the Maze.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

personality coming through, something presented alongside the role itself. Robert Morley in *Edward My Son* was always Morley (an amoral wit, a sort of Wildean demigod), and this is what the audience revelled in, not in the incredible half-insane character he was supposed to be portraying. Transferred to the screen, *Edward My Son* was dishwater without the presence of a personality to give it theatrical zest. Awareness of stage personality provides much of our pleasure in the theatre. Theatre is, after all, in its simplest terms, "playing", and the player can easily be as important as his role. The degree to which a performer has developed a consistent role for himself determines whether he is simply a "type" or really a "personality". Practically speaking, there can be but one stage personality to a production, and the production must be dominated by it. Of course, stage personality is not the same as *off-stage* personality. A stage personality is the result of a creative process, like the writing of a play, something rather mysterious, yet at the same time something which is easily recognized. It is not merely a bundle of idiosyncrasies; it has form and consistency, what we are pleased to call artistic unity.

Graham is unique because hers is a stage personality which is not comic. Although she does occasionally compose a light dance, the personality she has created is tragic as tragedy is understood in all its meanings. This is why we have to fish for a vocabulary of Graham criticism. There is no one else like her. We find analogies among the comedians, but after a point the analogies fail because the effect of a comic stage personality is different from the effect of Graham's personality. Chaplin approaches Graham most closely, because his personality—that of the tramp, that is—is defined to the last detail of gesture; his personality is as *complex* as Graham's. But search as you will you can find no one in the "serious" theatre who is a stage personality as I am using the term. For one thing, it is not considered an asset for a serious actor to be "typed". And this is just as well, since it is not possible to plan a stage personality in cold blood. It seems to be a matter of accident and inspiration. Furthermore, our serious theatre is not really serious; most of it is merely pretentious, the work of specialists in various fields striving for "effects". Graham has been helped to achieve her personality by two specific conditions: she is outside the main stream of commercial theatre; and she creates her own roles. The modern-dance theatre thus makes possible certain miracles which are unthinkable on Broadway.

A non-performing artist's "personality" is what we call his style, the quality of his work which makes it recognizable as his, his special manner. Graham's personality also is partly, though certainly not completely, defined by her style; that is, by the particular way she behaves on the stage. Like all interesting artists, she can be easily parodied, though I know of no one with wit and skill enough to parody her well. She has hundreds of serious imitators, even among top-notch dancers. Valerie Bettis, for example, has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

imitated some of Graham's idiosyncrasies without achieving her style. Without the integrating force of the personality these idiosyncrasies lack validity.

Graham's style is distinguished by a certain primitive quality which she herself has termed "divine awkwardness". She seems to have made no concession to current notions of what constitutes proper or pleasing movement, and is always getting herself into what would ordinarily be considered undignified or ugly positions. We have come to expect weirdness when her movement is complex; her head goes out of joint, her hands flutter insanely, she almost limps across the stage. At other times her movement is a startlingly simple development of a simple gesture. She indicates a shout by opening her mouth and showing the sound by means of a simple hand movement. When she plays a sorceress in *Cave of the Heart,* a dance for four figures which parallels Euripides' *Medea,* she pronounces a curse simply by putting out her arm and vibrating the fingers. She makes such obvious gestures with an assurance that they are right, as they are. She carries the same gestures over into several dances, and, since the gestures have definitely become part of the stage personality we are discussing, they are accepted. In *Appalachian Spring,* some change in Graham's style might have been expected. This is an optimistic dance about a young couple moving into a new house in the springtime of pioneer America, and Graham, as a young bride, would have been pardoned a departure from her usual tensions and distortions. If she does depart from them, it is only slightly and through suggestion. The movement remains Graham's own, the bride is still Graham, and *Appalachian Spring* is a surprise all around: a pleasant ballad with a delayed-action explosion buried in it.

The fact that she is her own composer makes Graham peculiarly responsible for whatever she does. Here the analogy with comedians is strongest, because comedians either write their own material or hire people to write it who will keep their personalities consistent. No such situation exists in the serious theatre, except in Graham's. We have therefore no call to excuse Graham the performer the faults of Graham the composer, nor to worry about the ruin of the composer's conception in the hands of the performer. We are forced to give up examining the two phases of production separately, though this has become automatic for most of us. Instead we must see Graham naively, as someone who is playing to us directly, not as a puppet who has been given a part of which she may unconsciously disapprove. If Graham is supposed to portray a succession of different women, we are not surprised that the women are all very much alike. We have seen Graham as Emily Dickinson (*Letter to the World*), as a Brontë (*Deaths and Entrances*), as Medea (*Cave of the Heart*), as Jocasta (*Night Journey*), as Judith, as St. Joan. But what we have seen each time is Graham in another aspect. The different roles of a single stage personality are like the different roles assumed by a dreamer; the role is an excuse for the portrayer to express *himself.* This is true not only in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conception of roles and plot but in the smallest gestures as well. Graham is never like a ballerina doing classroom *pirouettes*. She believes in the gestures she performs. The effect is of improvisation, if improvisation could ever be so inventive and consistent. She seems to be acting out for us, spontaneously, in the way she finds most expressive, something which is important to her. Her performance cannot help but be uneven and dependent on personal factors. But the excitement communicated to an audience when Graham is at her best, as she was in her performances at the Juilliard School in April, is not easily described. No wonder audiences treat her as a personality. They have been thrown into a very personal relationship with her.

In the jargon of her trade, Graham has "projection". In other words, she has no trouble getting an audience to notice her. Her face is clear and sharp, like a mask, but a mask extraordinarily mobile. Her features are "strong" in the everyday sense; she is striking even when standing alone on the stage in repose. In addition to her face, Graham possesses, in the way of pure gifts, a small slight body, stubby little feet, and a peculiar arrangement of joints which permits her to raise her leg straight up at the side, past her ear. Every one of these peculiarities has been used in the formation of her stage personality. The small body, which does not seem small unless a larger person is near, is used to emphasize Graham's very human weakness. Thus, when Graham overcomes an obstacle she never towers over it; instead she clambers up on it, as she does on the male dancer who plays the Minotaur in *Errand into the Maze,* a beautiful abstraction of the Theseus story. The incredible leg extension, too, is used to good effect in this dance. When the danger is over and Graham comes to the mouth of the cave exhausted, she extends her leg in exactly the way people raise their hands to their temples after some grueling experience. Graham's amazing leg permits her to do easily what all serious dancers tend to do: she can externalize and magnify a gesture by transferring it to another part of her body which has greater range. When Graham does something technically amazing like her leg extension, we regard it not as a technical feat but as simply Graham's way. Her way is the way of movement and gesture, and we have come to expect that her personality will be expressed completely in those terms. Her apparent indifference to the normal physical limitations of joints and muscles is something that no imitator can match. Valerie Bettis and José Limon do amazing and beautiful things, but in Graham we are beyond amazement. Her peculiar body is the indispensable first ingredient in the making of her personality.

She "projects" through her face and body some special secret to the audience. When she appears on the stage with a group, we pick her out at once as the one with whom we are to deal directly; the others are merely a live backdrop. Although she almost always performs with a group, she is essentially a solo dancer. What she does in the way of composing for her group is apart from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her functioning as a personality. She is always far more important than the group. The heart of every dance is her own solo part. The stage is cleared, and, like one of Shakespeare's heroes, she turns to confide in her audience. It is almost as though dance and dancers had their reason for existence in providing a new stimulus for the resumption of the solo we saw in some previous dance. The question at the back of the spectator's mind is "How is Graham going to respond to all this?" This element of sameness in a subtle way makes for more sustained interest than does constant change. We may not know *what* is going to happen, but we already know *who* is involved; and that means we are in on a secret. It is the secret the ten-year-old has when watching Chaplin, and the possession of the secret gives one a primitive sense of power. This is why you can go for "an evening of Graham" rather than a program of her dances. There has been more emphasis on personalities in dance than in drama—people want to see Pavlova or Argentinita and not their works—but with Graham the situation is different from what it is with most dancers. The classical Russian ballerina was told to perform so that every man in the audience would fall in love with her. In other words she was to project *herself* right off the stage and almost into the laps of the bald gentlemen in the first row. Graham is not engaged in such a flirtation. We are never concerned with the real Martha Graham who exists in the everyday world. Her stage personality has theatrical validity only. Who cares about meeting Chaplin's tramp? Graham's masterful feat of projection is never simple eroticism. Every time she creates a new solo she is able to add something to the total picture of the personality which the audience somehow believes it already knows. Graham is displaying something much more interesting than her mere self, though her self is the agent.

Her stage personality has a peculiarly modern appeal in that it is the personality of a woman who is not beautiful or charming but pathetic, terrifying—and complex. The female stage performer as the erotic ideal is no longer adequate in a serious theatre which is supposed to have learned that women can be taken off pedestals and looked at sharply. Graham presents a woman who has neurotic fears, feelings of inadequacy, and secret longings for romance and achievement. In *Death and Entrances,* in which is evoked the somber atmosphere of the heath surrounding the home of the Brontë sisters, she broods over past loves and clashes with her sisters, who suffer from the same kinds of frustration. In *Every Soul is a Circus,* a series of comic vignettes, the frustrated woman is seen going through a number of silly shenanigans with the men of her dreams. She experiences alternately a frenzy of anticipation and a ferocious boredom, both full of Graham's typical intensity. For not only is she frustrated and tortured; she is possessed of a demonic energy. Her feelings are deep, and when she is acting instead of suffering she is wild and dangerous. She is the fiendishly jealous wife of *Cave of the Heart,* in many ways a preposterous dance except for the light it sheds on the Graham personality. Here

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she is so maddened that she retires at the end into a kind of cage (one of Isamo Noguchi's ingenious designs) which looks as though it is made of twisted briars. Graham's hatred is masochistic. Her final victim is always herself. This is why, when she is not suffering deeply, she seems about to do something which will *eventually* make her suffer. Her Judith is never really triumphant; she is in terror of the tent, and the final victory actually seems to be expressed in a tone of defeat. The silly woman of *Every Soul is a Circus* is a role which Graham assumes out of what may be a masochistic impulse to show herself in the worst light. She is never an attractive woman, as either men or women would think of feminine attractiveness. She is self-critical, as in *Every Soul is a Circus* and *Cave of the Heart.* Or else she pretends to forget that she must be aware of onlookers; she has introspective reveries in which she probes her own feelings. Thus, a certain woman's inner life is mercilessly stripped bare in *Herodiade* (and in the earlier *Letter to the World* and *Salem Shore*).

Even *Appalachian Spring,* which seems so uncomplicated on the surface, does not hide the truth of Graham's personality; namely, that it contains tensions, frustrations, powerful passions, and dangers. Graham's personal style of movement is the language of this truth, since it does not seek to cover anything up with mere prettiness. Graham's duet with the young husband in *Appalachian Spring* is touched with an awkwardness which proclaims that the bride is not smooth and fine but a woman with a very complicated emotional life. The husband is a stock figure by contrast. In fact, most of the male figures in Graham's works are stock figures. The female figures portrayed by other members of her company are sometimes even less.[2] For example, the Cordelia in *Eye of Anguish,* a messy pantomime of *King Lear,* is dressed in a pink and white striped dress apparently designed to emphasize the fact that she is a girl made of sugar candy. The impersonal figures flitting around Graham point up her personality all the more. I do not know whether this is intentional. It certainly shows in the contrast between Graham's style and that of the other women in her group. Theirs has a certain smoothness and loveliness with which we are familiar from other dances; Graham sometimes arranges these movements in startling patterns, but she never makes them rough and compellingly gestural as her own movement always is. The women are usually attendants or children, people who are inferior, innocent and vague. Since they are inferior, Graham can dominate; she is Queen in her realm. Since they are innocent, Graham's vice and suffering are all the more apparent; the other dancers make up the pastoral element in a kind of double plot. Since they are vague, we have no interest in them as people at all, except

[2]Only in her most recent work, *Canticle for Innocent Comedians*—presented at Juilliard in April—has Graham succeeded in composing for men as individuals. And her choreography for the women soloists in this dance—in which she does not appear—is also indicative of a new approach in composing for personalities other than her own.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as human figures seen in contrast to their Queen. In *Deaths and Entrances*, children appear out of some wistful day-dream of the sisters' happier past. In costume and gesture they are utterly different from the three frightening wrecks of women who dominate the work. *Eye of Anguish,* in which Graham does not appear, reminds us how much Graham's presence means in her work. Erick Hawkins' acrobatic agonies as Lear are hardly a substitute for the artistically restrained emotional articulateness to which Graham has accustomed us. And the volatile "bad" ladies, Goneril and Regan, are merely brilliant in an exciting trio with Edmund. "Merely brilliant", because they are so obviously showing off their technical dexterity, their snaky arms, their lithe torsoes, their long hair. Cordelia, who has less chance to show off, is too sweet for words. The bodies of these dancers are compact and brittle, whereas Graham's equally small body has a strange capacity for emotional life. At least, this is the contrast which Graham forces us to see.

Graham's agonies as a woman have a wider significance. She sometimes casts herself as a more or less neuter figure, in *Errand into the Maze* and *Dark Meadow,* for example. Although the feminine characteristics of her personality are still apparent in these roles, she seems to be taking the part of all humanity. In *Errand into the Maze,* she is a human being confronting a monster. In *Dark Meadow* she represents bewildered mankind in search of the meaning of life. The stage personality does not change when the concept is broadened in this way; it expands. Humanity as represented by Graham is passionate, tortured, bold, and afraid. Her private psychological inferno becomes a Hell of mythic proportions. In this Hell, the masochistic personality is the eternal victim. It is prepared for sacrifice in *Herodiade.* It goes forth alone to meet the monster of Fear in *Errand into the Maze.* It immolates itself in *Cave of the Heart.* It is sanctified—if only feebly—in *The Triumph of Joan.* The audience accepts the victim as a substitute for itself, as in all sacrificial rites. I believe I do not claim too much for Graham in calling her a kind of modern scapegoat. She often appears in a slim white dress, the sacrificial costume. In *Letter to the World,* Death is a large black creature who comes to engulf the little white-robed figure. In *Herodiade,* the sacrificial costume is concealed by a black over-garment. At the end, an attendant prepares the protagonist for something unknown which, as she waits in front of her mirror, she has been steeling herself to meet. Instead of dressing her, the attendant *undresses* her, slipping the black garment off her shoulders and down to the floor in a way that suggests that all defenses are being removed. Graham stands in her white nightgown of a dress, and what is on one level the agony of a neurotic woman seems suddenly to become the fear of every helpless victim before unknown forces. It may be that Graham sees women as eternally victims; or it may be that she sees humanity as victimized and herself as one female representative. In any

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

case, her stage personality combines the particular and the general with amazing facility. More amazing than Chaplin's, perhaps, because it is somehow more specific to be a woman than a man and more general to be a tragic victim than a comic one. The audience accommodates itself more easily to "the little guy" than to "the suffering woman"; yet the latter's appeal is to something deep within us.

A stage personality only has validity in a world in which it can play its role. Every stage personality creates an artificial world, like Chaplin's world of big cops and little bighearted girls. Graham's world, projected against curtains or a cyclorama, is much vaguer than Chaplin's. Vagueness is its very nature. Although Graham herself is not vague, she always responds to vague forces. Her world is a mysterious place, impossible to understand, and like all mysteries, it is terribly frightening. Graham often has great fits of fear, as in *Errand into the Maze*, where she is obviously terrified at what her imagination presents to her, since she has little trouble overcoming the actual monster. She avoids the genesis of situations, preferring to confront a situation as a completed mystery. In *Deaths and Entrances*, for example, the three sisters are presented at once. The flashbacks give only a tiny inkling of what went before; they cannot explain the mystery. Explaining mysteries makes them less frightening, and the Graham personality is too much at home in its fears to give them up easily.

Graham's theatre is the wordless expression of nameless terrors. We all sense these terrors, which are thoroughly irrational, but they are hard to put into the rationalizing mold of speech. To express a primitive view of the world, Graham uses primitive means, for no poetry is so free from the demands of reason as dance is. When paraphrased in words, her work often sounds sentimentally mystical. It may be mystical, though mysticism is an irrelevant concept in discussing Graham's work; but it is never sentimental. It is the authentic statement of a personality; expressed through the muscles, the viscera, the emotions.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GEORGE BARBAROW

Dreiser's Place on the Screen

A SERIOUS FILM, *A Place in the Sun*, has been selected in the Motion Picture Academy as relatively one of the best of the past year in several categories; it is based, according to its main credits, on Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*. Evidently a serious comparison is invited, for Hollywood, in its own estimation, has gone all out.

A short synopsis tells the familiar main events of book and movie alike. A gauche, moneyless young man is given a job in his wealthy uncle's factory. He is secretly intimate with one of the girls in his department. She becomes pregnant. Abortion is sought, but not obtained. Meanwhile, the boy falls in love with a rich girl. In order to free himself of his entanglement with the working girl, who is now demanding marriage, he arranges for her accidental drowning, is caught, tried, and executed.

In this simple story, Dreiser discovers great implications. The writer explores the young man's background and character, his successive environments, and especially his motivations. Tied to this examination is an indictment of a social and economic system that neglects the boy's education, provides him with cheap materialistic goals, allows him to drift into dilemmas he is in no way equipped to understand—let alone resolve—and in a shallow, expedient manner convicts him, and self-righteously disposes of him as if he were garbage, on the settled assumption that he knows right from wrong and has deliberately chosen to do wrong; also, this society has no machinery for recognizing any possibility of regeneration, and insists upon murder as a reply to murder. The novel is a passionate denunction of a pretentious moral code that is blind to facts. The prosecution is a thorough distortion of fact and reason alike; the defense is a network of elaborately contrived falsehoods; the bewildered victim, acknowledged by his lawyers to be a coward, is batted about in the courtroom like a shuttlecock. It is the author's considerable achievement to have presented these insights to the reader without overly didactic prejudice; although the writing style is notoriously awkward and repetitious, the realization of the significant factors in the action of the story is solid, and at times monumental. *An American Tragedy* is a moral epic.

Looking at the picture, we expect some changes as a matter of course, but we are hardly prepared for the sweeping revisions we see on the screen. The moral is not quite reversed. It is altogether different. It has become Crime Does Not Pay. But here this brilliant platitude lacks the ironic neatness and merciful economy that characterized the M.G.M. series of two-reelers produced fifteen or twenty years ago. Making the message six times longer has not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

increased its urgency. *A Place in the Sun* retains the heaviness of the original novel while carefully avoiding Dreiser's trenchant, pessimistic approach to his material. In effect, the audience is now exempt from any responsibility for the terrible crime: although the picture was designed for adults, there was an ever present danger that it might be seen by children, that it might therefore be *too* instructive. The film is thus a transformation involving more than ordinary convenience.

The scenarists have simplified the boy's motives and predicament beyond recognition. Book One of the novel, comprising his early life and the formation of his character, with his romantic dreams as compensation for his revulsion against a dismal environment, is completely left out; there is little indication that the rich world to which he aspires is shallow and riddled with vanity; the action of the girl's drowning is funked by having the boat overturn in a long shot, so that we, like the jury, must wonder why he fails to save her; the ferocity of the prosecutor is so nearly unmotivated, on a personal level, as to appear gratuitous (in the book he wants to impress the voters); the absence of crowd hostility in and out of the courtroom suggests that the murderer is getting a relatively unprejudiced trial; the minister in the death house too easily pronounces guilt, thus making the verdict speciously logical; and finally, when the boy is led away to his execution, one of the other prisoners says, "I'll be seeing you." Here the moviehouse crowd is permitted a quick laugh for the last fadeout.

The changes are primarily omissions. In general, a facile excuse can be found for them; it is the great length of the original, with its enormous number of details. Even if the scenarists had wished to tell "everything", they could not have been expected to cram all the events of the novel into two hours of screen time. The esthetic challenge was to find visual images consistent with the author's ideas, to release the imagination, to create, in the sense of inventing, a new set of images that would illuminate the theme without reducing it. But there were two drawbacks that made the creative method impracticable: Dreiser's bitter criticism of the American scene, and the need to make the scenario suitable to the movie style of George Stevens, a director whose work has never betrayed the slightest interest in the lightning-like possibilities of movie shots (in previous films, his "flash" backs have lasted as long as fifteen minutes), whose photography is slow, passive, and decorative, not active nor panoramic nor aggressive, and almost without any overtones at all. Indeed, it would be difficult to find a moviemaker whose mannerisms are less suited to the dynamic, large-scale design and implications of *An American Tragedy*, a proper scenario of which could have tested the talents of an unsentimental Griffith or an unselfconscious Eisenstein.

The Stevens approach is theatrical and naturalistic. A recent Los Angeles newspaper interview reveals that he believes the audience accepts the image on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the screen as real, and that the cinema's only weakness as an esthetic medium is its two-dimensional nature. The screen's flatness is deplored because it tends to break down the illusion of reality. The spell of reality can be lost by obtrusiveness on the part of the camera; cutting is an unavoidable necessity whose shock must be softened by careful workmanship (the shots should give the impression of flowing from one into the next almost without interruption); close-ups and angle shots are introduced not so much to show important details in a particular way, as to "model" the actor and thus keep him lifelike by making him appear solid. Stevens is especially reluctant to leave any scene until it is completely acted out. He will not even break into a speech until is is finished. His camera is resolutely held on whatever actor is speaking, stays with the scene, presents all actions chronologically, will never anticipate or recollect actions, will not show or represent two or more events simultaneously by cross cutting. Stevens evidently has a horror of abstractions; an image on the screen is "real", therefore it is simply itself, with only one meaning, and is non-symbolic as a matter of course; the image of a *thing* as distinct from the image of an actor is seldom the subject of a shot, and it is presented only to identify the thing accurately, as a person might normally see it, not as a camera *could* see it; things are represented as being seen by one of the actors, almost never "behind his back".

It might be argued that this anti-symbolic method is appropriate to Dreiser, who was a theoretical naturalist himself, but Dreiser never went so far as to exclude external observations; he managed to inform the reader of many more things than he represents his characters as knowing, or understanding. Although much of his narrative is told subjectively, as seen and felt by the feeble protagonist, the wrongness of Clyde Griffiths' views is deliberately contrived; the reader sees throughout that the boy's ambition is sustained by wishes and hopes, not by aggressive intentions based on reasonable knowledge of his various situations. Dreiser takes great pains to show that the "hero" has ingrained weaknesses, in particular an inability to be at all articulate or objective about himself, or any thing, or anyone else. Because of his deficient and distorted view of externals, Clyde drifts helplessly into progressively more terrible dilemmas; so indecisive is he that he finally commits murder accidentally while in the midst of discovering that he cannot do it deliberately; afterwards, he cannot comprehend the extent of his plight, and gives several different versions of the drowning, all false. In *A Place in the Sun*, evidently trying somehow to replace the great mass of specific details about the boy's early life that Dreiser tells in Book One, the scenarists make their victim relate a few paltry facts to the rich girl's father, as an explanation for his lack of polish; here the real point of his "not having a chance" is muffed. While reading the book, we know the extent of the unlucky hero's actual chances and inabilities, but while watching the picture, we are given no contrasting facts, and so are inclined to accept his story as genuine, or at least plausible. The little speech, contrived by the screen-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

writers and not to be found in the novel, gives the murderer too much insight. It should not have been included without showing clearly that it is spoken by a character who doesn't understand what he is saying. In *An American Tragedy*, the boy attempts to gain insight only just before he dies; indeed, he does not *want* to know himself truly, least of all to tell anyone, until the minister's almost morbid sympathy and the terror of death combine to make him search his innermost feelings, where he finds nothing to give him courage; then, characteristically, prodded by the minister, he releases a wonderfully trite message to potentially wayward boys.

A Place in the Sun is a pathetic misreading of the novel, whether deliberate or not, pathetic because Stevens seems to be sincere in his effort to "base" his picture on Dreiser, and because the director's methods lack the scope to encompass the subject. The reliance upon theatrical scenes that are overlong and therefore limited in number, the presumed "reality" of sights and sounds, the evident belief that the best photography is the finest-grained and the glossiest and the smoothest lit; all these personal characteristics are at variance with, and spiritlessly opposed to, all the work of the great moviemakers: Méliès, Dreyer, Pudovkin, Dovzhenko, Murnau, Chaplin, Griffith, Vigo, Clair, Pabst, Eisenstein—the list of men who knew and know more than Stevens seems endless; these characteristics are also at variance with reason and experience: a movie shot *is* abstract, *and* unreal, *and* discovers virtues in its flatness as opposed to merely normal perspectives. The shot is a symbol in spite of itself, always related—if only physically—to all the other shots in the whole film of which it is a part; and every cut is inevitably a shock, an emphasizing reminder that a new time-and-place condition is now in effect. The previous shot is gone with the cut, but there is no guarantee that it will not return to be seen again, nor is there any guarante that the next shot to come will not have some totally unsuspected time, place and subject. If only to avoid a chaotic visual pattern, the moviemaker must control his shots by exploiting the special characteristics of his equipment; the camera, a mere machine, does not make a film automatically (as implied by Robert Brown in the essay *Film Myth and the Limits of Film*), nor does an actor, nor an audience. The film maker guides the camera and composes the shots as a painter manipulates colors with a brush; he should also do the editing, so that the shots may have a consistent, organized pattern. Stevens, seeming in the present instance to be shirking his responsibility, takes refuge in stage scenes, and denies the inherent symbolism of all visual images as if fearing to tackle possible complications; in consequence, *A Place in the Sun* gets precious little "said", for all its ponderous two hours of length, except, of course, that crime does not pay, something we know already.

For comparison with Stevens' timid approach, look at one shot in Stroheim's *McTeague*, based truly on the Frank Norris novel. At the wedding a minister is shown reciting the service. Suddenly the camera is raised and tilted down-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ward to look out the window into the street below, catching a glimpse of a passing funeral procession. In two seconds there are two sacraments, and the picture, at one of its crucial moments, reverberates with impending doom. Something of this order is needed to express, in any film purporting to be based on *An American Tragedy*, the foreboding that alternates with the hero's hopes throughout the story; something is needed to bring out the moments of fright that drive him to greater frightfulness. It is not out of place to suggest a slow motion shot of the girl drowning; some such nerve shattering treatment is absolutely required to sustain any serious contention that the film is at all true to the writing of Theodore Dreiser.

But such a shot would be abnormal, and abstract, and would have overtones. It would tend to disrupt the process whereby literature is reduced to pulp.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOSEPH BENNETT

The Lyre and the Sledgehammer[1]

If you ignore the possibilities of art,
huh, huh, huh, huh, huh, &c.
you are likely to become involved,
huh! in extreme, huh, huh, huh, huh, huh

&c. difficulties. For instance, when
they started to make a park
at the site of the old Dutch, huh, huh, huh!
cemetery, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, &c.

they could not, digging down
upon the hoary, heh, heh! graves,
find so much as a thighbone, huh, huh, huh!
or in fact anything! wha, ha, ...

under the head of . . . Yes, yes, of course!
wha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Whoh, ho,
hee, hee! Rather a triumph of
a sort! Whoop la! Whee hee!—don't you think?

THESE ARE THE FIRST THREE and the last stanzas of an eight-stanza poem by W. C. Williams, "For a Low Voice", dating from the middle of the 1940's. The intervening stanzas are little different from the ones I quote. Compulsive babbling[2] of this sort, with its onomatopoeia *ad absurdum* and its pronounced surrealist derivation, is typical of the later Williams.

The gift was, to begin with, purely lyric. It was small and clear, pure and true. It was there; and it flashes through occasionally in the later poetry. It was a single string, delicate and sure, matched with a fine ear and watched with a discriminating eye. The villain was the vice of grandeur, the attempt

---

[1]THE COLLECTED EARLIER POEMS OF WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS. New Directions. $5.00. THE COLLECTED LATER POEMS OF WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS. New Directions. $3.00. PATERSON: BOOKS 1, 2 & 3, by *William Carlos Williams*. New Directions. $1.50. PATERSON: BOOK 4, by *William Carlos Williams*. New Directions. $3.00. MAKE LIGHT OF IT: COLLECTED STORIES OF WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS. Random House. $3.50. THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS. Random House. $3.75. WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS, by *Vivienne Koch*. New Directions. $2.00.

[2]The term is Northrop Frye's, not used by him in connection with Williams.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to forge out of a single metal string a sledgehammer which could beat against the major anvils. Let me begin by trying to show what Williams started out with:

Among blue leaves
the apples green and red
upon one tree stand out
most enshrined.

Still, ripe, heavy,
spherical and close,
they mark the hillside.
It is a formal grandeur,

a stateliness,
a signal of finality
and perfect ease.
Among the savage

aristocracy of rocks
one, risen as a tree,
has turned
from his repose.

There are a number of imagist poems in Williams' texts which are as good as this one—lithe and deft, with a sense of the variations of rhythm. Impressionism—the sensitive registering of nuances of color, sound, taste, smell and touch—is the technique by which the images are built up, and they are left, completed, untouched, stuck on the page with Chinese clarity and precision. Poems such as "The Bull", "Metric Figure", "Winter Trees", and "The Dark Day" show that Williams perfected the imagist technique beyond any of the group who were working with it before 1914. These poems are excellent and should be preserved.

But in the later work, the images lose their edge, grow pointless—*the back wings/of the/hospital where/nothing//will grow lie/cinders//in which shine/the broken//pieces of a green/bottle*—fail to "come off". Williams attempts to move beyond the picture—*Twenty sparrows/on//a scattered/turd://Share and share/alike.*—and the imagist technique will not carry the "moral". The desire to "be profound" overwhelms, somewhat rancidly, the very sure, restricted range of his talent—*Round white eyes dotted with/jet live still, alert—in/all gentleness! unabated/beyond the cackle/of death's stinking certainty.* At last we reach the point where his technique, designed for cold and clear-cut sequences of sense-impression, breaks down constantly as he stresses it with psychological or emotional burdens:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

O lovely
apple! What a
deep and suffusing brown
mantles that
unspoiled surface! No one

has moved you
since I placed you on the porch
rail a month ago
to ripen.
No one. No one!

By this time, the imagist zeal, the pure fervor for tight clean expression, has been replaced by an attempt to grapple with the major themes, an attempt at "profundity", at the handling of world-shaking events and crises:

Russia, idiot of the world, blind idiot
—do you understand me? . . . . .

While
armies rush to the encounter
I, alone, dream before the impending
onslaught. . . . .

I am
at home in my dream, Russia; and only there,
before the obliterating blow
that shall flatten everything
and its crazy masonry,
am I at home. . . . .

O Russia! Russians! come with me into
my dream and let us be lovers,
connoisseurs, idlers—Come with me
in the spirit of Walt Whitman's earliest
poem, let us loaf at our ease—a moment
at the edge of destruction. . . . .

Russians!
let Mayakovsky be my sponsor . . . . .

It's that background
from which my dreams have sprung. These
I dedicate now to you, now when I am
about to die . . . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Williams, prophet and teacher of the nations, salutes Russia as he is about to die, proclaiming "the power of my dream." The lines are worthy of Edith Sitwell; they show how much bad poetry is alike the world over. Miss Sitwell has staked out the atom bomb as her literary property and there are hints and references to The Bomb in this poem which suggest that Williams may shortly be in danger of hearing from her solicitors. The touch of self-pity near the end, the grandeur of the old dying genius, adds a final note of vulgarity to a garish piece of self-exhibitionism.

Williams' journalism presents the most conventional and fashionable social attitudes, clichés of social observation served up as profound wisdom, often in a vituperative tone. As a journalist—take his poem "Impromptu: The Suckers" as an example—he writes in the heat of the moment, for quick consumption, raging and ranting, bombastically, with crude, primitive irony, without reflection, without care, expressing his moral self-righteousness at the expense of some "current event". Inevitably the note of self-pity creeps in, and he is off commiserating the hard plight of poets and poetry in general, at random, in any cross-section of his work, without relation to his immediate text.

As a poet, Williams is intensely self-preoccupied, entranced with the image of his own ego. This preoccupation has its roots in his Romanticism, as does the concept of the self as hero—*I pick the hair from her eyes/and watch her misery/with compassion*—he is always *pitying* someone. It reaches its characteristic development in the sentiment of self-righteousness. The *persona* of the neurotic poetess who appears so persistently throughout *Paterson* exhorts him

> to take all your own literature and everyone else's and toss it into one of those big garbage trucks of the Sanitation Department, so long as the people with the top-cream minds and the "finer" sensibilities use those minds and sensibilities not to make themselves more humane human beings than the average person, but merely as means of ducking responsibility toward a better understanding of their fellow men . . . . .

That is to say, the criterion of value of a literary work is a biographical one, determined by a study of the author's personal life to decide whether he is a more "humane human being" than the average. Some sort of a norm of average "humane human" behavior would have to be established, and then the moral life of the author in question weighed to determine whether it falls short of, or exceeds this norm. The exhortation—an unusually cantankerous display of priggishness, of moral superiority—is made against himself through a *persona,* indicating a split attitude on this question.

Implicit throughout much of Williams' work, and part of his priggishness, is the self-congratulatory feeling that he is more sensitive to moral values than

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the general run of writers. Self-pity is naturally associated with this attitude, and the theme of the poet as a sacrificial victim of society grows until it becomes one of the major obsessions of his work. This incestuous preoccupation with the pathos of the existence of poets—a preoccupation Romantic in origin—adds to the inwardness of his work. The duties, the destinies, the miseries of poets—the poetry breeds upon itself for subject matter.

The Romanticism which is the mainspring of Williams' compulsions manifests itself in the most obvious ways—zest for the Gothically gruesome; fascination with the natural functions of defecation, and, to an incredible degree, of urination; the loud anti-intelligence harangues. Such phrases as "But who are You?" are likely to occur at random, in any of the poems, and then disappear in a mass of blurred, foggy images, confused ideas, turgid rhetoric, pathetic fallacy, and sentimentality of a moaning, sobbing type. He poses in Shelleyan attitudes, echoes Swinburne, and, Delphically inspired, prophesies like Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

The Strawberry Hill Gothic is presented with such zest, in all the gruesome details and incidents of the shorter poems and *Paterson*, and in such quantity, that it lends a determining strain of its own to Williams' Romanticism:

> *Or better, a brain without a*
> *skull. I remember once a guy in*
> *our anatomy class dropped one*
> *from the third floor window on*
> *an organ grinder in Pine street.*

What aesthetic effect is secured, what dramatic point is made, what emotion is expressed or underlined, escapes me. I cannot see in such writings as *Twenty feet of/guts on the black sands of Iwo* any care or any patience, anything but a childish pleasure in the gruesome for gruesomeness' sake.

The obverse face of the gruesomeness is the sentimentality; an age which takes pleasure in gruesomeness is generally a sentimental age. In Williams' work, there is a maudlin quality which is not exceeded by any other writer of our time:

> *I can't be half gentle enough,*
> *half tender enough*
> *toward you, toward you,*
> *inarticulate, not half loving enough*
> *BRIGHTen*
> *the cor*
> *ner*
> *where you are!*[3]

[3]The passage is from *Paterson*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The sentimental is often directly mixed in with the gruesome, and in one interesting case, both are combined with the mail carrier's motto. Occasionally, the indulgence in raw emotion reaches the point of hysteria:

> *Your face! Give me your face, Yang Kue Fei!*
> *your hands, your lips to drink!*
> *Give me your wrists to drink—*
> *I drag you, I am drowned in you, you*
> *overwhelm me! Drink!*
> *Save me!*

More often it is at the level of the maudlin, incessant repetitions of the "Beautiful Thing" motto in *Paterson,* or in the constant emphasis throughout his work on the passive suffering of helpless victims, the pathos of tortured creatures who cannot fight back and who do not provide a subject for dramatic development.

Williams continually uses the word "love" as a slogan or a label, but it remains a *word* only—it is never achieved in the context of the poem. It does not arise as the supreme unifying crux of a train of symbolism, of a series of carefully conceived images, or of a dramatic action. The word is merely tossed in at random—whenever there is a slow spot—whenever, as in *Paterson,* the ramble of language, the adventitious succession of images, the babble of opinions and moralizing hits a slow spot and will no longer flow. Coagulated, choked with detritus, the thing grinds to a halt of its own inanity, and the word "love" is tossed up into it. The use of the term is so paltry and disfiguring that the ear is dulled to it; it becomes a dead word, a killed word, four letters merely of black print on the page, as harsh and stuffless as any of the verbal counters knocked about in commercial advertising that once were part of the living language.

Williams' anti-intellectual attitude is puerile in its implications. "Let the metaphysical take care of itself, the arts have nothing to do with it," he warns in his 1944 Introduction, and proceeds to his old whipping boy, the university. The dreary, repeated attack on the university throughout his work amounts to a phobia in *Paterson,* with the hammering repetition of its motto "No ideas but in things." It reveals a pompous, bigoted mind, not merely anti-intellectual in attitude, but dedicated to the principle of non-intelligence. Note again that these attacks occur without relation to their context in the work itself.

In the long discordant babble of *Paterson,* a Whitmanesque celebration of the Self occurs—*What shall I become,// Snot nose, that I have/ not been? I enclose it and/persist, go on. //Let it rot, at my center./Whose center? I stand and surpass/youth's leanness.// My surface is myself.* This celebration is interrupted, without relevance, by a typical harangue against the university—that which opposes the Self in its divine non-intellectual compulsions. The university is made up of *clerks/ got out of hand forgetting for the most part/*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to whom they are beholden. This harangue, the Self versus the lowly clerks, is in turn interrupted by a prose sequence in which a doctor examines a specimen of a patient's urine. There had been no hint of a medical theme in the 44 pages of *Paterson* preceding. This is immediately followed by a scene in which a young naked colored woman proposes copulation. The copulation sequence is cut short by a Technicolored picturization of luxury life, with political overtones. This hackneyed bit of poster art is then superseded by a prose inventory, by items, of a small estate left in 1803, to contrast with the luxury. And so on, for the 228 pages of *Paterson.*

Williams' use of repetition is perhaps his most pronounced anti-intellectual device. Such passages as

> *Level it down*
> *for him to build a house*
>
> *on to build a*
> *house on to build a house on*
> *to build a house*
> *to build a house on to . . .*
>
> (Sic. End of poem)

babbling away senselessly, are in their inanity an affront to the intellect. The overwhelming repetition of sententious phrases—*I believe; So be it; Beautiful Thing*—especially marked in *Paterson,* has an effect of sledgehammering the mind into eclipse so that it functions as a sensory organ only.

The use of onomatopoeia—*Cha cha, chacha, cha!*—seems an extension of this technique, as do the various devices employed to give an air of pseudo-profundity to simple-minded statements:

> *I warn you, the sea is* not *our home.*
> *the sea is not our home.*
>
> *The sea* is *our home whither all rivers*
> *(wither) run*
> *the nostalgic sea*
> *sopped with our cries*
> *Thalassa! Thalassa!*
> *calling us home*
>
> *I say to you, Put wax rather in your*
> *ears against the hungry sea*
> *it is not our home!*

The passage[4] is from *Paterson* and illustrates Williams' habit of trying for an

[4]Note the imitation of Joyce—*w/ither, (wither),* and the "borrowing" of the Anna Livia theme. Also the open lift from the *Cantos—Put wax rather in your ears,* and the *Thalassa!* echoes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

air of "profundity" by making a pompous statement and then reversing it—*the sea is* not *our home; the sea* is *our home.* Elsewhere in the same poem, the Furies are dropped in here and there, as with an eye-dropper, and splattered irrelevantly over the page:

> foreign 12,868 of whom 237 were French, 1,420 German, 3,343 English—(Mr. Lambert who later built the Castle among them), 5,124 Irish, 879 Scotch, 1,360 Hollanders and 170 Swiss—
>
> > *Around the falling waters the Furies hurl!*
> > *Violence gathers, spins in their head summoning them:*
>
> The twaalft, or striped bass was also abundant, and even sturgeon, of a huge bigness, were frequently caught:—On Sunday, August 31, 1817, one seven feet six inches long and weighing 126 pounds,

Williams is quick to pick up and transmit echoes of the important writers of his time. He depends heavily on surrealist techniques; there is much in *Paterson* that resembles a bad reading of Cocteau or Apollinaire. Joyce, Eliot and especially Pound reverberate off and on throughout his work, and Marianne Moore will find some of her fish turning among Williams' "undulant seaweed." Joyce provides him with the portmanteau word and Anna Livia's river, but without the intellectual force and concision which made them vivid. Eliot is alternately attacked, parodied and imitated—almost every style of Eliot's long career is copied in parts of Williams' verse.

Pound's influence is extensive. There are a number of direct references, and there is the full page letter from Pound which constitutes all of page 165 of *Paterson.* Occasionally Williams utilizes typical rhythms of the *Cantos*—page 65 of Paterson derives rhythmically direct from the *Usura* canto. The technique of Williams' page set-up is now and then like that of the *Cantos* and there are a number of passages in *Paterson* which are, stylistically, close imitations. The extended section on money and credit theories in *Paterson*[5] is heavily influenced by the *Cantos* in page set-up, rhythm and style. Another letter from Pound is quoted briefly, and the credit theories, which are hysterically presented, are essentially the same ones which Pound has attempted to popularize in the *Cantos* and elsewhere. Unfortunately, their presentation lacks the vivacity and clarity of presentation that Pound was able, earlier, to give the same material.

No doubt Williams had the *Cantos* in mind in making up his own long poem, *Paterson,* with the ambition of producing a work as inclusive and powerful. But in the *Cantos,* even in the Inferno sections, it is seldom that there is a lapse of intelligence. The material is always organized with an aesthetic, or narrative, or ideological intent, and the less glamorous, even the

[5]Part II of Book IV.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

repellent, sections of the *Cantos* remain passable and negotiable, to become eventually rewarding. The splendor and accuracy of the *Cantos* do not justify their occasional failures and their eccentricities of composition. But the splendor and accuracy do tend to mitigate these faults. The point is, that in Williams there is little splendor and little accuracy; and there is not the eccentricity of an intelligent, cunning artisan, but merely incoherence.

Space prevents a detailed formal analysis of *Paterson*. The poem clearly establishes Williams' descent from Whitman and Sandburg. It purports to take a city—Paterson—as a type of the world-city, and incorporates this city in various *personae*—a man, Paterson; his daughter, Phyllis; a river at the Falls; a neurotic poetess; a neurotic young male poet; and a myriad set of lesser *personae*. The poetess and the poet correspond at great length—apparently with Mr. Williams—discussing their personal neuroses. The poetess is the most exasperating of these correspondents—one of her letters, covering pp. 105-113 of *Paterson* continuously, is nearly nine pages long. At times Wagnerian, at times folksy, the poem flows on, shifting confusingly from one of these *personae* to another, and introducing at haphazard, wholesale prose sections of local history, about forty percent of which have a gruesome slant. Inexplicably, the poem returns constantly to the voice of Mr. Williams himself, apparently *not* as one of the *personae* incorporating the world-city of Paterson, and we get both self-pity and Whitmanesque paeans to the Self; as well as cantankerous opinions and harangues on banking and credit, labor relations, the atom bomb and theories of literary composition.

There is nothing wrong with the idea of taking one city as the world's city, and developing its character in the direction of universals through *personae*. It could, if intelligently developed, be a fruitful and original theme. But to put this stamp on the formless morass of *Paterson* and claim that it describes some rational plan behind the non-sequential babble is impossible.

Much of it is purely capricious—there is the "slant" page, where each line of type is slanted at a different angle on the page, and another full page of the poem is devoted to the drilling log of an artesian well. As an example of all that is worst in Williams, take the Madame Curie-Atom Bomb sequence in Part II of Book IV of *Paterson*. This ridiculous *mélange* is openly derived from the Hollywood extravaganza, starring Greer Garson, on Madame Curie—

Curie (the movie queen) upon
the stage at the Sorbonne
a half mile across! walking solitary
as tho' in a forest, the silence
of a great forest (of ideas)
before the assembly (the
little Polish baby-nurse) receives
international acclaim (a
drug)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It goes on for ten or twelve pages, a curious mixture of popular science and sentimentality, sprouted in a movie-house, and interspersed throughout the section with harangues on labor relations and banking, and a full-page circular on credit theory presumably provided to Williams for insertion in *Paterson* by one "August Walters, Newark, N. J." Also to be found between the Greer Garson-Madame Curie episodes is a long letter from the young neurotic male poet, continuing for three pages; passages from St. Luke and Chaucer; references to Sappho, Sophocles, Woodrow Wilson, Carrie Nation, Artemis, Liberia, the Abbess Hildegard, Tate, the Spanish Civil War, Phideas, Reuther and Ben Shahn; part of a Pound letter; a diarrheal case history in prose concerning "a stool submitted by the nurse for the usual monthly examination"; and a prose account of an early explorer's landing on the shores of what is presumably New Jersey.

The question arises as to whether Williams' intent is poetic—that is, is he attempting, fundamentally, to write poetry:

> When a man had gone up in Russia from a small town to the University he returned a hero—people bowed down to him—his ego, nourished by this, mounted to notable works. Here in the streets the kids say Hello Pete! to me—What can one be or imagine? Nothing is reverenced, nothing looked up to. What can come of that sort of disrespect for the understanding?

This is a short poem of the late Forties, "The Unfrocked Priest", written out without any line breaks. Read as prose, the lines are a limply-phrased statement of comparison of the social attitudes towards university graduates in Russia and the United States, with definite overtones of self-pity. Try it as a "poem":

I

When a man had gone
up
in Russia from a small
town
to the University
he
returned a hero—
people
bowed down to him—
his
ego, nourished by this,
mount-
ed to notable works.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

II

Here
in the streets the kids
say
Hello Pete! to me—
What
can one be or
imagine?
Nothing is reverenced
nothing
looked up to. What
can
come of that sort of
dis-
respect for the under-
standing?

If the reader wishes to see how this statement is converted into "poetry", he ment into poetry? Or is the arrangement of the words into broken lines a hoax; that is, is the arrangement purely adventitious, casting prose—and pretty bad prose, at that—into the "form" of poetry, but not altering its structure? Here is another one:

> By constantly tormenting them with reminders of the lice in their children's hair, the School Physician first brought their hatred down on him. But by this familiarity they grew used to him, and so, at last took him for their friend and adviser.

If the reader wishes to see how this statement is converted into "poetry", he should consult page 206 of Williams' collection.

I think that Williams avoids poetry, for the most part, sidestepping it, and substituting for it sentimentality, pathos, self-revelation, self-pity, surrealism, raw emotion, gruesome anecdotes, and hammering repetition of grand-sounding phrases. In *Paterson* this is especially marked. His "poems" are headless and footless. Cut them anywhere, excise their middles, slit them in half, and like amoebas, the jelly flows back together and the animal is the same. Cut off their heads, take off their tails, put their elbows down where their knees should be—no harm is done because the animal is formless, plastic; it all flows together, and any part of *Paterson* can be taken out and put elsewhere in the poem. The poem can be started at any point in its text, run around its entire circle and brought to a conclusion at the starting-point; and no harm is done.

Williams' stories are somewhat better than his poetry; a number of them are honestly conceived and unpretentious, particularly the earlier fiction, which displays a conscientious regard for realistic observation, and provides an accurate

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tone for the subject in hand. There is a certain amount of control; at times humor, and good close-mouthed tough dialogue. But nothing remarkable; at their best, the earlier stories do not rise above the mediocre, with the possible exception of *An Old Time Raid*, a picaresque piece, vividly executed. The later stories tend to become rambling reminiscences, generally in the first person, disconnected and autobiographical.

The one long story in the collection, *Old Doc Rivers*, is an interesting account of the life of a versatile country physician, addicted to dope. Done in a factual, honest style, the piece gives an amusing inside story on medical eccentricities and practice, medical codes and shibboleths, etc. Of the fifty-one stories in the collection, eighteen are directly concerned with medical cases, presented with full clinical detail. The novelty soon wears off, and the tireless repetition of medical deaths and disasters seems morbid and dull, unimaginatively treated. Mere pointless horror—the physical misery and agony of the moribund and the helpless sick—is often the only impression that is created by the vignette. The grotesqueness of medical freaks and freak accidents is exploited, seemingly for no other purpose than to shock and stun a reader whose appetite has been numbed by the long succession of atrocities. A bedbug crawls around on a colored boy's eardrum; a prematurely born fetus is visible through the mass of membranes. And so on.

Sections of it are straight medical journal material:

> acute purulent mastoiditis of the left side, going on to involvement of the left lateral sinus and finally the meninges. We might, however, have taken a culture of the pus when the ear was first opened and I shall always, after this, in suspicious cases. I have been told since that if you get a virulent bug like the streptococcus mucosus capsulatus . . .

The material is not used as Flaubert would have used it, structurally, to develop a theme, an effect or a character, but merely for display in itself: an inert mass of medical information. Williams takes us through a post mortem, obligingly cutting open a brain, and lets us assist at an enema—*Mix up a little warm soapy water. We'll need some vaseline.* There are dialogues on socialized medicine—pro and con—and discussions of Science vs. Humanity written in a stilted schoolboy "essay" manner.

Williams, in these frankly autobiographical anecdotes, frequently visualizes himself as a hero. He contrasts others physicians' money-grasping attitude with his own deep sacrificial sympathy, his own unselfish outpouring of loving time and care on the poor and the oppressed. He defends an injured workman against a wicked, ruthless corporation. And so on, generally with a sobbing undertone.

The overall impression of this collection of stories is one of pointlessness; of haphazard jottings set down at spare moments without any attempt at dramatic development or conscious integration. The autobiographical slant is considered

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to be enough; it pardons, even justifies, the most serious lapses. I cannot believe that Williams is any longer seriously attempting to write fiction.

His bent is autobiographical; throughout his poems and prose an intense preoccupation with his own personality is the compelling impulse in his work. The *Autobiography*, as printed in a separate volume, is a haphazardly written account of his prejudices and opinions, unreasoned and un-argued, with more material on the messianically inspired, mystically compelled figure of the poet. In it there is the recurrent tendency to develop situations in which he appears as a hero, a tendency psychopathic in its implications. The *minutiae* of his existence are liberally ladled out. Unrestrained emotion, philosophizing in sophomoric platitudes, crass ignorance and stupidity are here given free play; and the passages describing his mystical poetic inspiration and rapid techniques of composition point up many of the faults in his other work.

Vivienne Koch's painstaking study of Williams is a sensible and orderly book, collecting a great mass of facts and references about Williams, and treating the poetry through extended paraphrase and close textual analysis. There is a minimum attempt at evaluation, other than her statement that Williams' poetry is his most enduring achievement, and her rather tentative subscription to the theory that in *Paterson* Williams has performed a function messianic in nature, consistent with his mystical calling. At this point, and to reinforce such a view, she quotes from the Sermon on the Mount, concluding her study of his poetry with this quotation. The general tone of her book is mildly favorable, and cautious. She is not afraid to censure Williams on occasion, but in the main it is a sympathetic and inconclusive study.

Williams is not without his virtues; the equipment he started out with is still with him. No doubt if he dug far enough into the detritus he could refurbish that pure talent for images, sounds, colors and textures which he enjoyed in earlier years. But the "serious" work is a failure, and a complete failure, utter and ignominious. To hammer against the major anvils requires intelligence, rational discrimination, dramatic skill, psychological acuity, and emotional subtlety—especially intelligence. And patience and care. These qualities simply do not form a part of Williams' poetic equipment. The verdict of criticism must inevitably be to link Williams with Sandburg; and the difference between them—Williams' relative superiority—will be seen to be one of degree, not of kind. That is to say, Williams has a better ear and uses a more subtle and evolved technique.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

R. W. B. LEWIS

The Topics of Discrimination

THE COMMON PURSUIT, by *F. R. Leavis*. George W. Stewart. $4.50.
THE FIELDS OF LIGHT, by *Reuben Arthur Brower*. Oxford. $3.50.

IN HIS MOST RECENT COLLECTION of essays, Dr. Leavis is more concerned with bad critics than with good literature. He offers, in passing, some remarks of great delicacy and exactness on Shakespearean tragedy and the last plays, on the satire of Swift and of Pope, on the poetry of Samuel Johnson, the poised strength of Hopkins, the not always stable irony of E. M. Forster; but these are not entirely audible amid the din of Dr. Leavis's quarrels with an assortment of Philistines—Wyndham Lewis, John Maynard Keynes, George Santayana, the admirers of W. H. Auden, the analysts of T. S. Eliot, and all the academics: especially the academics. Dr. Leavis's title is intended to suggest the notion of criticism as conversation, or rather as disputation; *Contra Academicos* might have been an apter title, with its provocative echo, for the curious, of St. Augustine's first piece of writing. Dr. Leavis is often against the academics for the best possible reasons, and we ought to stand beside him when, for example, he writes the following about an editor of the letters of Hopkins:

> He leaves us no room for doubting that what he intends to discredit is the influence (the source of infection); that what he dislikes is the living force. . . . There is a classical quality about this instance—about Professor Abbot's use of Hopkins . . . to bolster a self-importance that feels itself threatened by all that Hopkins represents: the disturbing new life, the stir of spirit that manifests itself in unfamiliar forms.

Whom the academics would destroy, they first edit, or soften by biography; here Dr. Leavis's courage and his insight are fused. But an obsession with the enemy and its allies over two dozen items (mostly detached from the original context of debate in *Scrutiny*) adds up to a repetitious and, I am afraid, sometimes distinctly boring volume, a rag-bag display of slightly over-age animosities: a minor addition to the works of Dr. Leavis, and one which provides us, more than anything else, with an occasion to reflect upon the Leavis manner.

For what Dr. Leavis has, in the determined absence of anything approaching a philosophically articulate position, is precisely a manner. I am *not* concerned, more than superficially, with the bad manners—in rejecting, for example, an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

opinion of A. C. Bradley as "completely wrong-headed—grossly and palpably false"; or in accepting Mr. Krutch's book on Johnson because it "surprised me very agreeably. It is not only inoffensive; it is positively good." Nor am I speaking of the class-room manner which lines us up and raps out examination questions: about a proposal for broadcasting by Dame Bertha Phillpotts: "Is it acceptable? (and if not, why not?)." I am interested in the stance from which Dr. Leavis gathers together and concentrates his energies; in what happens when he does so—in something more than a quirk or a humor; some congeries of habits and instincts that serves the function of principle, sets up the questions and predisposes towards the answers. The process (a better word escapes me) through which Dr Leavis gets at a poem or a novel is well enough known; it reveals itself again in this volume in the attempts to exemplify good criticism by coming down as hard as may be on bad criticism: in the distinction urged against Rene Wellek, between the act of philosophising and the act of criticising literature; in the finger-waggling at George Santayana for supposing that significance in poetry is related to "ideas"; in the exposure of Samuel Johnson's erroneous notion that words in poetry are selected to convey thoughts already formed and existing as such in the poet's mind. Words in poetry, Dr. Leavis explains, "invite us, not to 'think about' and judge, but to 'feel into' or 'become'—to realise a complex experience that is given in the words." It would be absurd and ungrateful to deny the substance of truth in this view, with regard to a great deal of the literature we happen most to cherish these days; it would be unwise to forget the perceptions to which the view has led Dr. Leavis and, partly through his good influence, many another reader. The point is that, since criticism for Dr. Leavis is a matter of feeling into and becoming, rather than of thinking, it assumes the nature not of a position definable and defensible in the center of all our mental life—but of a manner; and a manner harried into ill-temper by its own paradoxes.

The support of D. H. Lawrence is an instance—Lawrence who, one realises (after an initial surprise), is the novelist most likely to appeal to the critics of feeling and becoming; Lawrence about whom Eliot declared coldly that he had "an incapacity for what we ordinarily call thinking." I am sure that he did; and it was just this incapacity that made it possible for Lawrence—travelling the magical but not unfamiliar route of other artists, from poverty to richness—to explore his own novel and narrow area of experience. James's acuteness of vision is not less plainly a product of his blindness. But Dr. Leavis, anxious for his cake, is unwilling to say so; he falls back, in the void left by the expulsion of concepts, on a habitual loyalty and the sheer carrying-power of his voice: to rest an inconsistent case on the lame assertion that Lawrence could, anyhow, think a lot better than Wyndham Lewis. Philosophy, to paraphrase an old aphorism of Gilson, is always unkind to its opponents.

Contemplating Dr. Leavis's odd combination of pre-rational sensibility and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the assumption of almost mathematical precision—the combination and the paradox that comprise the manner and lead to the irascibility—I think we may draw an analogue from the history of rhetoric. In the criticism of Dr. Leavis, I believe that we encounter again the art of rhetorical analysis conceived as a severe discipline and hovering on the verge of becoming the method of scientific inquiry into the nature of things. The terms shift too rapidly for any satisfying summary; but the analogue I have in mind is that 16th century rhetoric which called itself dialectic. It was a dialectic which, on the one hand, made clear its rhetorical origins: it was crowded with devices taken from the art of persuasion, it was concerned with eloquence and the responses to words and images; but it stepped up, on the other hand, its ancient interest in objects and essences to the point where Francis Bacon could convert it into his new, topical, experimental science. A method which relates the emotions and the laboratory may sound a trifle mad; it was, and is, more than a trifle maddening; a man does not know where to have it. For it is a way of proceeding, in analysis and discussion, which defends itself against logic by claiming the superiority of feeling over reason; but which seems to be claiming, simultaneously, the rational rightness of its analysis of the sources of emotive response. It looks at artifacts as objects; and the aspects it inquires into are those least susceptible to exact description.

The method of inquiry consists in the application, not of principles or causes or "norms" or standards", but of "topics"—to tranliterate the Greek word; of places, seats of argument, heads. Here we are back with the dogmatic sensitivity of Dr. Leavis, as he replies to Rene Wellek that "to figure (the critic) as measuring with a norm which he brings up to the object and applies from the outside is to misrepresent the process." In Dr. Leavis's practice, we find rather an untidy list of topics with which the poem or novel is experimentally prodded, with the aim of discriminating its unique character and its "place" in the world of literature. The untidiness of the list results in a formlessness in the discussion; Dr. Leavis simply exhausts the relevant topics and rushes the manuscript off to the printers; and this is justified, in the rhetorico-scientific tradition, since the purpose is not to make general statements about human experience, with the aid of poetry: but to pin down an object. How impressively Dr. Leavis sometimes accomplishes the task, we have known from his earlier books; we observe it here in, say, his comment on the irony of Gibbon and Swift:

> Gibbon's irony . . . habituates and reassures, ministering to a kind of judicial certitude or complacency. Swift's is essentially a matter of surprise and negation; its function is to defeat habit, to intimidate and to demoralise.

There the objects—objects located, as Dr. Leavis has said, in "the realm of things made and detached"—are identified with uncommon precision, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

always in terms of their way of engaging their observers. Or, again, in his revelation of the "creative alliance" in Pope between "fantastic incongruity" and "Augustan order." Or the brilliant notation of a single quality: "Hopkins' humor is the humor of a disinterested, mature, perfectly poised and completely serious mind."

Here, and in a limited number of other instances, the topics as applied do their inestimable work of discrimination. There are moments when they fail with equal resonance: in an essay on Henry James, where Dr. Leavis moves joylessly from bias to bias to lose himself in a large misapprehension of *The Golden Bowl*, discovering therein an outrage to moral sensibility that is more in the topic than in the book; or in the more challenging inquiry into *Othello*, where he pushes a nice awareness of the degree of Othello's own culpability to the point where, by all but exonerating Iago, he simply denies every feeling we helplessly have about the play. These wanderings are permissible, heaven knows, even though they violate Dr. Leavis's own prescription. And they are preferable to the belaboring of bad critics: those, that is, who do not write from a precarious balance between eloquence and science. But the belaboring goes on; Dr. Leavis's manner, which gives us so much, seems unhappily, by its very nature, to require a constant expression of itself in fretful and impatient abuse.

Mr. Reuben Brower, the author of *The Fields of Light*, was at one time a student of Dr. Leavis, and the excellence of his dense, closely-written little book is no doubt another token of Dr. Leavis's valuable influence. Mr. Brower is very gifted at feeling his way into the structures and textures of works of literature, of seeing how words come together to create a poetic experience; and we are fortunate to be able to watch him do so. But *The Fields of Light* (the title comes from the preface to *The Golden Bowl*) is not primarily a show of talent for this game; it is rather an artful attempt to develop the reader's talent. It is, in a very rarefied sense of the word "teach", a book for teachers of literature about the teaching of it, by a teacher (from all reports, a remarkably able one). It is an image of teaching much the way an early Socratic dialogue may be said to be; it is not a book for the class-room, at least not for most of the class-rooms we are likely to remember. Mr. Brower engages in the teaching art, first by making it unavoidable that we read, carefully and imaginatively and thoughtfully, the many poems he quotes and forces us to explore. He does no preliminary work; he neither paraphrases nor apologizes for not doing so; when he comes in with his own voice, after quoting from Frost or Wordsworth, he assumes—and the device soon works—that we have just read the poem aloud; what he says has the odd air of eliciting some further insight by his response to what we ourselves have said. The book does not discuss teaching; it teaches. It is a very strenuous experience.

Unlike *The Common Pursuit*, Mr. Brower's volume is all compact; other critics are sparingly mentioned, and always with gratitude; and the book's beginning is in its end. That end is what the author calls "the integrity of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the imagination", something which announces itself in the designs of great poems and novels, in the life of their language; something not detachable and definable, but realisable in a disciplined submission to the text. What it amounts to, in any given work, Mr. Brower does not insist upon; he wants us to detect it ourselves, though he modestly indicates his own findings. He too has a list of topics for the labor of discrimination—no check-list, but signs of what the reader may discover at successive depths of penetration into a poetic object. Their names provide the titles of the first section: dramatic design ("the speaking voice"), design in imagery, in metaphor, in irony, in sound, and whichever of these appears as "the key design". In the second section, "In Large Letters", Mr. Brower coaxes us into tracing the various combinations of those designs in the organization of longer words—*The Tempest, Mrs. Dalloway*, the "Timon satire", *Pride and Prejudice, A Passage to India.*

I would, obviously, locate the distinction of the book not so much in the critical method, which is familiar; nor in the catholicity of illustration (including Greek and Roman poetry), nor the reassuring soundness of taste: but rather in the pedagogic ambition and power. The worth of the ambition scarcely needs defending; the habits Mr. Brower hopes to develop are, as he says, "among the primary activities of civilised men": the habit of making discriminations, the habit of "finding relationships, finding order in experience." But the very adroitness of the pedagogy may seem to limit the achievement. Like every good teacher, Mr. Brower makes exasperatingly few statements; there is a lack of stress in the discussion, nothing is said in italics; there is some quiet humor, as of privately murmured jokes, but the author's personality and convictions never intrude. We frequently wish that they would, though that may be a sign of our laziness. But Mr. Brower does not demonstrate, he inquires; and the order of inquiry, as somebody once pointed out, is different from, is perhaps the inversion of, the order of demonstration. I am not sure to what extent the order of inquiry—with its occasional sense of aim-lessness, its occasional uncertainty about the amount of weight due to this aspect or passage—may be carried over and set down in durable printed form. I take an example of these speculations, and an instance of the book's distinction and its limitation, from Mr. Brower's exploration of the moral essay "Of Riches", the so-called "Timon satire" of Alexander Pope.

The limitation would perhaps be more apparent by reviewing the chapters on *Mrs. Dalloway* or *A Passage to India;* as we discuss those novels with Mr. Brower, we ache more than usually for some clear statement from him, not only about the design of their balanced ironies (brilliantly as that is revealed), but about the "felt life" they inclose, the moral content: the living issue they reflect, the life of the soul they enact. The distinction is more evident in the chapter on *The Tempest;* Shakespeare's imagination had the firmest integrity of any poet who ever lived, except one; and the key design (of sea-change)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can be found in literally almost every phrase. But the treatment of Pope is sufficiently typical, and the satire is closer in size and scope to the poems from which, in the first section, Mr. Brower draws his topical vocabulary. What he finally uncovers in the poem as a whole is an intricate design composed of a web of "continuities" of imagery, tone and irony, deriving from and related to and expressive of "a whole style of living": a complex Augustan ideal, which Mr. Brower reluctantly formulates as that of "the aristocratic builder who works in the Roman tradition with a sense of propriety to use and who aims also at a larger propriety, at designing with the varied order which is nature's." This is what Mr. Brower comes out with; it is the end of an inquiry, not the beginning of a demonstration; we are not aware, at least, that it controls the discussion; it is slipped in quietly enough at the close. Mr. Brower starts by quoting the entire poem—204 lines; then he draws our attention, by re-quoting, to the passage beginning at line 141:

> And now the Chapel's silver bell you hear,
> That summons you to all the Pride of Prayer;
> Light quirks of music, broken and uneven,
> Make the soul dance upon a Jig to Heaven.
> On painted Ceilings you devoutly stare,
> Where sprawl the Saints of Verro or Laguerre. . . .

Beginning thus, almost casually, beginning anywhere (as that good conversation which is teaching does begin), Mr. Brower gets into the poem by noticing its variety—first, briefly, of imagery; then of tone—"the cultivated voice of the guide . . . the pompous announcement . . . the soothing voice of the social raconteur . . . the shout of the herald." The diversity of tone reveals a central irony, which Mr. Brower identifies, as he moves cautiously forward, as "the tone of 'Roman cultivation'" being used by Pope to symbolize the culture which the satire's victims "miss while aping it". The Roman tone is itself multiple, one of the many multiplicities which become, it is eventually proposed, "expressive fully and precisely only in relation to a cultural ideal"—that ideal summarized above. The ideal and the complex of complexes by which the ideal has its way, in the poem, with its despoilers: these and their relation *are* the design, the product and the proof of integrity.

Although my condensation does much damage to the subtlety and to the flexibility and thoroughness of Mr. Brower's exploration (which covers twenty-five crowded pages), it may perhaps indicate the several dimensions which Mr. Brower gently and persuasively probes, and the somewhat limited area within which he is content to travel. The limitation has its validity, for if Mr. Brower had moved further or faster he might have left us behind; and his whole purpose is to help us use new resources for enlarging *our* areas of awareness. It is an enlargement of life, and Mr. Brower has shown us the way to be grateful.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GROVER SMITH

Equilibrist with an Eagle

THE LOST CHILDHOOD AND OTHER ESSAYS, by *Graham Greene*. Viking Press. $3.50.

THE FOURTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH MYSTIC Richard Rolle gave a tantalizing injunction: "Hate thou no wretchedness on earth except that that thy pure love can cast over and disturb; for perfect love is strong as death, true love is hard as hell." It seems to me that this must recapitulate precisely the moral content, if not always of Mr. Greene's writings, then of the formula which a critic of those has to abstract before drawing any conclusions about them. Mr. Greene's problem, both in his novels and "entertainments" and in the assemblage of essays now to hand, is perhaps even harder than hell: to comment on the acts and works of man as a creature at once not much higher in dignity than the stercoricolous pinch-bug and yet by the grace of God potentially exalted. Mr. Greene hates and loves, both at once; morally he is never indifferent. I do not get plumb to the bottom of Rolle's meaning, but I think that the sentence implies something like that. If a thing isn't worth loving, it isn't worth hating. In Mr. Greene the attitude came from personal conflicts that *The Lost Childhood* in part traces. The equilibrium is most evident in such a novel as *England Made Me*, where the principal character suffers the kind of clinical exposure that makes his vileness seem really ugly because it is the shadow of something better. The technique involves a second equilibrium between concern and ostensible indifference, for Mr. Greene feigns the objectivity, so to call it, expected of a realist. *Brighton Rock*, the best thing he has published, gives us a soul terrifyingly contemptible and makes us pity what it is.

If one begins *The Lost Childhood* with some such view of Mr. Greene's pattern, the most interesting passages are those where he talks about himself. They are negligible in bulk: only two essays, "The Lost Childhood" and "The Revolver in the Corner Cupboard", can be called really intimate. But he is also sometimes talking about himself when on some other topic. No piece in the collection more than "The Revolver in the Corner Cupboard" reminds me directly of Greene the novelist. At the treacherous age of seventeen, having found a revolver, he started a private game of "Russian roulette" to which periodically he resorted, when bored, half a dozen times before at length it became unexciting. The facts seem to be one problem and the attitude another. I think that one in reading is likely to be uneasy at the latter. How can a man assume such detachment, even from a self thirty years vanished, as to chronicle its folly in *sang froid*, without either boasting or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

disapproving? The quality of the detachment, however, reveals in the chronicler a boredom not wholly dissimilar to that in the chronicled. The first problem therefore solves the second: Mr. Greene is not much more self-analytical than in 1922. The youth described neither struts nor broods; he merely adds danger to tedium to fill up his emptiness. His "responsibility", which causes him to take precautions against family disgrace if he should shoot himself, sounds like an instinct to be respectable by not letting down the side. The novelist too gives the effect, not, certainly, of never having been influenced by the romantic or the cancerously puritanic, but of never having allowed either to make him nervous. The sense of responsibility is focused through something more durable now, but the conception of life is uniform. It goes back indeed, by Mr. Greene's evidence in the title essay, to the pattern given him—or, better say, recognized by him—in *The Viper of Milan*: ". . . religion might later explain it to me in other terms, but the pattern was already there—perfect evil walking the world where perfect good can never walk again, and only the pendulum ensures that after all in the end justice is done." This when he was fourteen; but even at ten he could find Quatermain and Curtis of *King Solomon's Mines* not very credible, too heroic for the life of disappointment he knew to be real.

I wonder if in Mr. Greene this vision of man's actual deceit and defeat is not still much closer than is at all common in Roman Catholics to a notion of absolute human ineffectuality and depravity. He balances it with faith in divine mercy, and draws characters who can be pitied though they are not idealized. His criticism, constituting most of *The Lost Childhood*, exhibits at its best—and the flaw of the book is that this is not consistently enough—an incisive knowledge, always in implicit relation to his own work, of other novelists' ways in the labyrinths of the human heart. In speaking of James he says, ". . . to render the highest justice to corruption you must retain your innocence: you have to be conscious all the time within yourself of treachery to something valuable." And he finds that "the final beauty of James's stories lies in their pity: 'The poetry is in the pity.' His egotists, poor souls, are as pitiable as Lucifer." This sort of comment, I should imagine, would make one sorry not to have read James; but (though I am not sure of "innocence") it is as applicable to Greene.

Most of the essays are slight. Mr. Greene contrives his sharpest inclusive delineations of literary figures when he is least restricted by a single text. He likes to paint large, and the miniature proportions of reviewing are not his métier. Yet some of the most exact portraits are in the reviews. He lays Samuel Butler out, uncurls his shriveled wings, and pins him down to the specimen-board with surgical delicacy. The result in a little over two pages is a shrilling likeness. Mr. Greene is distressed as well as repelled, even here, by what he has to show. Butler, however tiny of spirit, chirps like a man. Here

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as elsewhere Mr. Greene follows back, in his obsessed way, the self-paralysis to its beginning: "One is instinctively aware in [Butler's] past of an ugly, crippling childhood, attics and blackbeetles and some grim grammar school, and sadistic masters. His favourite author is Samuel Butler. . . ." And so too concerning Saki: "Munro was not himself beaten, Augusta [his aunt] preferred his younger brother for that exercise, but we can measure the hatred he felt for her in his story of the small boy Conradin who prayed so successfully for vengeance to his tame ferret." And of Kipling (in the same essay, "The Burden of Childhood"): ". . . the beatings, the card with the word LIAR pinned upon the back, the growing and neglected blindness, until at last came the moment of rebellion." If an author's enslaved childhood is not in evidence, then adult obsessions may be indicative; Mr. Greene is equally distinguished in isolating peculiar qualities of mature suffering, whether in George Darley, Frederick Rolfe, or Edith Lees.

With a few exceptions, some of which I have touched upon, the literary essays concern writers of minor achievement, I think because Mr. Greene can be more articulate about the obvious failures. But in no case can he offer anyone much congratulation; like even the greatest of his subjects, he must always reckon with "the inherent disappointment of existence, the betrayal of hope." There is a sterling maturity, an incontrovertible rightness, in this attitude. And yet it is so circumscribed, because its interest must be biographical, that it almost excludes the really literary procedures from its account. I would not presume to suggest that Mr. Greene should have emphasized form instead of ideas and origins—after all, mere analysis of structure, for example, never so far as I know has ranked as literature, and his essays are certainly literature—but I should be more content if he had more frequently, as in the studies of James, Dickens, M. Mauriac, and Mr. de la Mare, had occasion to examine the inner worlds of the art along with those of the artists. The ideal criticism of fiction or poetry considers both sorts of worlds. If American critics have much to learn from the genteel biographical method of Mr. Greene (and I do not think of any who could compete with his mastery of it), so might others more regularly reflect that the attraction of a suffering mind is often in its creative productions.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMUNICATIONS

Sirs,

Why do you, after deciding to print translations of the felicity and accuracy of those by Messrs. Arrowsmith and Merwin, include in your Spring Number Mr. Paul Blackburn's none too accurate and dubiously felicitous versions of three Provençal poets? Vivian Mercier's just strictures upon inaccurate translation make more urgent the necessity of pointing out that Mr. Blackburn does not know his paradigms sufficiently well to translate correctly "com vos *aves* auzit" in the "Vida" of Peire Vidal—not "he had" but "you have"—unless he has discovered a Ms unknown to the editors of the complete edition of the "Vidas", Boutière and Schutz. In the "Vida" of Raimbautz de Vaqueiras, Mr. Blackburn seems likewise unaware that Romagna should be rendered "the Balkans" or more precisely "the Roman Empire". I wonder too, why he translates the title "en" correctly in one "Vida" and then leaves it as if it were a Christian name in the "Vida" of Peire Vidal. Again, why leave "mesclatz" in the version of Guillelm de Peitau's "Vers" when it has already been translated correctly as "mixed up"? Some such word as "altogether" would have filled out the line adequately and without introducing the macaronic flavour of "Mixed up, *mesclatz* . . ." which sounds a bit Poundish—intentionally?

In the other renderings one can forgive perhaps the "dockside taverns" that appear in Peire Vidal's "Canso" but certainly unforgivable are the rollicking distortions of Vaqueiras' "Alba". The main features of the surviving profane "Albas"—to latterday *reading* audiences at least—are their economy, the variations in metrical pattern, the stock situation and the fixed language: "Gaita", "alba", "losengier", etc. This is true even of Uc de la Bacalaria's "alb' ab son novelh". Mr. Blackburn, on the other hand, inflates his version with spurious, *dramatic* (the "Alba's" stock situation is static, almost ceremonial), and alien details: "cold the pike and heavy", "Eastward, I am wantless"(!), "Snug, snoring, cozened, Christ" (the husband is never accorded more than the briefest of mentions, if any, in the surviving "Albas"), "soggy red" and "massive keys". The failure to translate the refrain is a minor blemish compared with all this rot which belongs with the phoney mediaevalisms of Rossetti and Swinburne in their renderings of Villon.

Mr. Blackburn might at least have done his readers the courtesy of placing at the head of his versions the chaste and apologetic "From the . . ." which covers a multitude of sins in "translation".

C. R. Busby

St. Paul, Minn.

Sirs,

Mr. Busby is perfectly right about the "com vos aves auzit". It means "as you have heard": the biographer speaks to his audience. But my translation of the pronoun into the third person was quite deliberate.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I was taken with the idea of Vidal sitting out his exile in various parts of the Mediterranean, homesick, and keeping check on the doings back at Marseilles by pumping newcomers for gossip two months old, buying them drinks, asking questions. "As he had heard" in the printed version reinforces this idea nicely, and is consistent with the setting and situation of this same, very-human goings-on in the *Canso*. I suppose such imaginative reconstruction is exactly what Mr. Busby objects to, and if I were a philologist, I would have no excuse for not committing suicide immediately.

I like the sound and feel of the *word* "Romagna", and at present I do not see that it is vital to your reader that he know the geographical limits of the area designated. Even if I had translated the word, how many of your readers would know what the limits of the Roman (Byzantine would be closer) Empire were in the Twelfth Century?

The prose of the vidas has a unique flavor which can be brought over by several techniques: by following the syntax to a reasonable point; by the retention of simple words and words for which there is no strict equivalent in English; and by the retention of place-names, where there is no great advantage to the reader for one to translate them. This is the same principle by which one might justify the use of archaism, either of terms or metre; for flavoring. Of course there are reasons which can be brought against any one or several of these techniques, and one must judge what one stands to lose or gain by such special usage.

En Barrals is a special case. Flavor aside, it sounds better to my ear than Lord Barrals or Sir Barrals. The translations, furthermore, *look* so damned English, and the tendency to mispronoune the name is given far too much of a chance. Sir Raimbautz looks like exactly what it is: an English word tacked onto a foreign word. The surname will submit to no anglisation.

Mesclatz in Peitau's *Vers*: I'm sorry—"altogether" or "some such word"? *Four* syllables and the strong accent on the first? Now that would be real macaroni. What a fine mouthful. Mr. Busby gives Pound credit for the *mesclatz* being in, as though Pound were the only writer in the last fifty years to put foreign words into his text for sound, clarity, exactness, rhythm etc. Any overall charge of "influence" would be justified, of course. I have absorbed a great deal of the man, and am grateful such a body of work exists to show where one can start from. Two essays, the Provençal sections of the *Cantos* and the *Langue D'Oc*, whatever else they do or don't do, they *translate*, i.e., present me and any other reader with a living civilization, living human beings, as well as a feel for that particular craftsmanship of composing words to music (a different thing from making a modern poem). Nothing Mr. Busby *says* in the letter would ever lead me to suspect that the Twelfth Century had any but the most academic interest, that is, aside from his impassioned tone.

Mr. Busby comes up against the job I've done with such violence, I feel he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

must love the language very much. I can respect that feeling of ferocity in the man. I only wish he had thought about the questions he intended to ask, or had himself tried a translation, before sitting down at his typewriter. He obviously knows the subject and must have the same information I have as to form, convention, cliché, etc. I do not see that he has thought about what is involved in bringing these over into a modern English poem.

There are specific troubles with a medieval vocabulary. There are words in Provençal, and in most other European languages of the time including English, which are not translatable into terms which even begin to suggest accurate meanings today. Pride, interest, self-love were all sins then. Today they have been transformed into virtues: namely, ambition, private enterprise, dignity of the individual, respect for the "person" (the last two from liberal apologetics). All this means a problem in poetic craft, if one is so perverse as to attempt translation of medieval languages.

An aristocratic vocabulary has been transformed into a bourgeois vocabulary. A revolution has reversed the *significance* (not the meaning) of many key terms. The sin has become the virtue, and vice versa. The simple adjective "noble" has become a term of derision. Modern ethics is much closer to that of the Roman Empire under Augustus. We are ages away from a Provençal civilization.

The importance of *form* to the troubadour must be taken into the score, but to go into it decently would require a full essay. The Vaqueiras' *Alba* is a good starting point for a short, illustrated discussion.

The original is a fine job technically, not only for its economy, but for its double set of rhymes, rhyming both at the caesura and at the line-end, the end-rhyme tying into the short fifth line of each strophe. I have tried to put some of the movement of the original into the eight-line stanza used in the translation, having to reverse the breaks, however, using my long lines for the three-and-five breaks, instead of his short ones. The cadences are not uninteresting and ride the ear well. So much for the attempt to translate form (Peitau's *Vers* was closer). But I will not jam the English syntax, or stretch it to its limits for the sake of the form.

The strophe form controls much of the handling of materials within the Provençal lyric: so much so, that there is a good deal of flat cliché and "fixed language". Some of this will translate with a freshness, much not. The material in this particular *alba* is extremely thin in literal translation. I seized on the irony implicit in addressing the song to the guard, and used this visual-dramatic point as a pivot on which to swing the rest of the material.

Much of what Mr. Busby calls "phoney medievalisms" is my own concession to form. Rather than add simply blank words to fill it in, I try rather to fill in with words that will work for the whole English poem, carry atmosphere, keep the irony in the reader's mind, and contribute to the emotion I find

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the situation. I do not believe I find the situation as static and ceremonial as the scholarly tradition might warrant.

To point up the strength of form in the Provençal as contrasted with the weak handling of the material (from the modern standpoint), let me translate the final stanza literally: "Lady, adieu! for longer I cannot stay/ In spite of myself it is necessary to go;/ But how heavy the dawn is to me/ Which I see rising so light./ Cheat/ Us, it would, the dawn, the dawn, yes, the dawn." *Enganar* can mean to blind as well as to cheat. The ending is just that inconclusive. Another stanza, even another two could be added, in spite of the *adeu*. Vaqueiras had simply run out of material, resting his case with his very fine metrical achievement. He didn't have to worry about "literary values".

I tried for an ending by making the *Domn' adeu* even more arbitrary than it is in the original. I placed the lover outside the castle in the wet fields looking back at the guard announcing the sun, and repeated again the irony of the sentry and his routine watch, and what he has guarded all night through: the picture given. The form successfully completes the Provençal poem. The English demands something else, and I made a try for it.

I think, by making it enough to hold the attention of a modern audience, and it amounts to critical editing, I translate more of the impulse of the original situation that created the delicate lyric than would have been possible taking verbal literality as a sole measure of excellence.

I hope this answers Mr. Busby's questions. Perhaps he was right in that I should have inserted a note at the top of the *Alba*. My apologies for that, in any case.

PAUL BLACKBURN

New York, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED